





# Minds, great and small

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## Malcolm Bowie

**EDWARD J. HUGHES**  
**Marcel Proust: A study in the quality of awareness**  
 212pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.  
 0521247683

**MARCEL PROUST**  
**Selected Letters, 1880-1903**  
 Edited by Philip Kolb, translated by Ralph Manheim  
 376pp. Collins. £15.95.  
 0002118216

**A Search for Lost Time: Swann's Way**  
 Translated by James Grieve  
 346pp. Canberra: Australian National  
 University Press. \$A16.95.  
 0708113176

In these disant days when such notions as "self," "consciousness" and "mind" still circulated among writers and caused them no shame, an incomparable team of collectors and custodians were at work upon the mental states of Europe. For Proust, Musil, Svevo and Cassini the mind existed, and was a fabric indefinitely subject to variations of colour, weight and weave. How acquisitive they all were and how impressive the range of their *mind-stuffs*: within one character, or across a spectrum of characters, the multifarious possible forms of the mental life were pressing to be born. For Proust and Musil in particular a newly discovered mental style, an unsuspected extremity of consciousness, could provide their capacious narratives with dramatic impetus of the kind that an earlier age had sought in pistol-shots, adulteries and financial crashes.

Edward J. Hughes's aim in his compellingly original study is to focus attention upon the corner textures in Proust's account of mind and from that vantage-point to re-examine the fine-pan introspective analyses for which *A la recherche du temps perdu* is endlessly acclaimed. He gathers abundant evidence to show that Proust the hyper-aware investigator of mental process was fascinated by simple or vacant minds and by minimal intellectual performances. Within the narrator's toiling self-consciousness, strange abandoned creatures loom up rather as Wordsworth's leech-gatherer did before the wandering poet - resembling a stone, a sea-beast or a cloud rather than a sentient self, and seeming to offer no more than momentary refuge for the human capacity to think. Proust's narrator characterizes such people fervently and without condescension: 'Or, though, in relation to Françoise, one could hardly say: she knew nothing. In that absolute sense, in which to know nothing means to understand nothing, save the rare truths to which the heart is capable of directly attaining. The vast world of ideas did not exist for her. But when one studied the clearness of her gaze, the delicate lines of the nose and the lips, all those signs lacking from so many cultivated people in whom they would have signified a supreme distinction, the noble detachment of a rare mind, one was disquieted, as one is by the frank, intelligent eyes of a dog, to which nevertheless one knows that all our human conceptions are alien, and one might have been led to wonder whether there may not be, among those other humbler brethren, the peasants, the herdsmen who are asl we the élite of the world of the simple-minded, or rather who, condemned by an unjust fate, to live among the simple-minded, deprived of enlightenment and yet more naturally, and essentially akin to the chosen spirits than the lost educated people are members as it were, elated, irritated, robbed of their own self-consciousness, of the sacred figure, kindfold, left behind in infancy, of the lost self; in whom, - as is apparent from the unmistakable light in their eyes, although it is applied to nothing - there has been lacking, to endow them with talent, only the gift of knowledge.'

Where Françoise receives her mindlessness as a divine beneficence, other characters achieve theirs by repeated acts of will. Their retreat from thought takes a variety of routes: into sexuality, into homely wisdom, into military discipline, into sleep. But this does not mean that Proust's account of mind is scattered through a variety of circumstantial insights. Indeed, Hughes powerfully rebuts the idea, which has been popular, that the novel is a desultory archive of mental states, appetites and dispositions. Not knowing and not thinking are recurrent objects of desire for the narrator, and the characters who remove themselves from thought or are dispensed from it—Françoise, the grandmother, the "jeunes filles en fleur," the officers at Bondères, Albertine

are performing a tantalizing epistemological shadow-play before his anxious gaze: they represent the mind not simply in retreat but waking up, on the other side of dullness or stupidity or regimentation, to new capacities for delight. And the narrator's artistic project, when it is finally formulated in *Le Temps retrouvé*, is designed to accommodate and promote his own deliciously raw mental states and to free him from debilitating introspection. Other minds, rather empty and rather clumsy, are premonitions of his own at its fullest and finest. By spelling out clearly the long-range calculations by which Proust builds towards the climax of his narrator's mental drama, Hughes is able to rescue numerous remarkable passages from what have often seemed the margins of the book.

Like many of its predecessors, this study moves in patient chronological stages towards the summit that Proust had already provided. How can it seem other than natural and sensible for critics in search of a dénouement to end their books as Proust ended his – by describing the narrator's final accession to creative poten-

Faust, and then as a zoophytic growth, a group of primitive marine creatures walking on land. Hughes mentions the divergent metaphorical tendencies that such sentences have, but in extreme slow motion. He loses the speed and audacity of Proust's transformations – from dog into madonna, from devil into sea anemone – and extricates from the force-field of the text a series of solemn and stable mental portraits.

But this is still one of those rare critical works that articulate a major and previously unrecognized pattern of meaning in *A la recherche*. In the face of that legendary Proust who invented his populous novel by backformation from his epiphanies and introspective trances, here is a writer who believes in the existence of other people, writes in response to the otherness of their minds and allows them to resist almost successfully the encroachments of his own omnivorous intelligence. Proust has been a servant, a dog, a pampered bourgeois and an empty-headed military man; and has accurately recorded each of his transmigrations. Blessed are the novel's fools indeed, if

pressing filial adoration or homosexual ardour or concern for the health and glory of his favourite society tigresses, the tone often seeks not simply to discharge enmity but to discover how much of it there is and how best it can be manipulated. During these years Proust's letters are strenuously orchestrated even when anecdotal and try out an astonishing array of stylistic registers. The arts being tested are often the lesser ones of gossip, badinage, flirtation and flattery, but these very arts, perfected, transcendentized, helped to give *A la recherche* its unique versatility of tone.

Proust writes to Reynaldo Hahn's sister, for example:

My nerves are frayed from insomnia, but I am enjoying my visit here thanks to Reynaldo, and you are associated with all my impressions, oh, my sister Maria, confidante of my thoughts, beacon to errant sadness, protectress of the weak, helmpate of the sick, source of goodness, spile of wit, sparkling rose, courageous kindness, breeze upon the sea, song of happy ears, shuddering sea foam, glory of morning, perfume of friendship, soul of the nights which you dazzle with your brilliance . . .

And so, exhaustively, it goes on. This letter, as Cocking remarks in his delightfully pointed introduction, "might have been written by Legrandin in a moment of delirium". And exactly the delirium of such utterances – the attempt to supersaturate experience with words – was to become a major source of comedy in Proust's novel. In training in these letters is the parodic imagination which was eventually to produce the grandiose verbal aberrations of Legrandin, Norpois, Cottarrus and Briehot – those accomplished professional people who each have a manic appetite for redundancy in speech. This range of character portraits is based upon Proust's sense of stupidity not as a native condition of certain mind but as a localized mental lesion. In these cases which are quite different from those minutely studied by Hughes, fantastically bludgeoning verbal performances are perfectly compatible with intellectual adroitness and professional success. Off their guard, obedient to the whim of salon society, preening themselves at parties, the engineer, the ambassador, the doctor and the academic speak their passions with visceral insistence and abandon.

In this extraordinarily revealing volume Proust not only provides a laboratory notebook towards that "physiology of chatter" which so excited Walter Benjamin in *A la recherche*, but explores, again in an improvised preliminary fashion, the subject which, above all others in the novel, was to show the vicious of the professional class dangerously astride: the Dreyfus case. The energetic satire of contemporary antisemitic discourse which we eventually find in the novel begins modestly enough in these letters. Antisemitism is a pervasive force in the society Proust chooses to frequent and the paths that it follows in everyday conversation are traced by him with saddening vigilance. Writing to Hahn about dinner at the Daudets, for example, he is prepared, perhaps over-generously, to allow Alphonse Daudet his talent and his charm, yet finds the suspicion of Jews and the explanations by "race" which permeate the household an affront to the powers of mind that Daudet in other respects emblemizes. Daudet is at once "a pure and brilliant intellect" and "simplistic in his intelligence". Having studied such mental hygiene and moral amphibians over countless dinner tables, and having lightly sketched them for his friends, Proust went on, in *A la recherche*, to produce a weighty critique of the society which fostered them.

But these letters which prefigure so much of the novel are not themselves works of art and do not offer short-cuts to any useful sense of what Proust's eventual achievement was to be. It was in his novel and not in his correspondence that he rose to the level of Mme de Sévigné. To anyone new to Proust and struck by the tempting silliness of this volume I would suggest, wait a couple of years and read *A la recherche* first.

But which version to read? Suddenly the choice is getting richer. The least one can add to James Grieve's predicament in beginning to publish his new translation in the wake of Terence Kilmartin's revision of Scott Moncrieff is that the world would have been a kinder place if a whisper from someone in publishing, or a timely chirrup from a migratory Proustian, had



*Eugène Atget's "Femme de Varrières" (1922), an albumen print by Chicago Albumen Works from the original negative by Atget, on show at the Serpentine Gallery from March 3 until April 1.*

as Hughes persuades us, the wondrous elasticity of the Proustian *res cogitans* would have been lost without them. The new pattern described by Hughes is so obvious once it has been seen that one wonders what repressive mechanisms within our literary culture can have been keeping it invisible until now. What has led us to value introspection so highly?

The English selection of Proust's early letters has been produced by a distinguished *triumvirate*: Philip Kolb edits, John Coombe introduces and Ralph Manheim translates. The volume which results from their concerted labours will be of special interest to those who have already read Proust's novel in English and found themselves wanting to know more about the emotional and stylistic workshop from which this supremely complex artefact emerged. Many of the letters collected here are experiments in feeling: whether Proust is ex-

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Cover picture Contemporary engravings of two interiors of an ice palace (from a book reviewed on page 171) built in 1740 by the Russian Empress, Anne (Yekaterina) at a honeymoon cottage for an out-of-favour prince whom she forced to marry a servant.

[illegible]



## Beyond God and evil

Chaim Bermant

ETTY HILLESUM  
*Etty: A Diary 1941-43*  
 Translated by Arnold J. Pomerans  
 226pp. Cape. £8.50.  
 0224021214

Reviewing this book is rather like reviewing the Book of Job. It is an extraordinary human document, so extraordinary in fact that I had to pause every now and again to ask if it could be authentic. By the end I felt it didn't matter for if this is a work of fiction it is a work of such imagination and power as to have the validity of fact.

*Etty* is the diary of a young Dutch-Jewish woman. It begins in March 1941 and ends in 1943 when she is deported to Auschwitz, but it is not another *Diary of Anne Frank*, or anything like it, for she is not a child, does not go into hiding (though urged to do so by her friends) and she seems determined to exclude from her consciousness the Germans and the all-pervading menace they represent. She is not blind to what is happening and has no illusions about what will happen, but tells herself: "I mustn't let myself be ground down by the misery outside." She has moments of panic, distress, even despair, but never self-pity, and although her body is broken, her spirit remains intact to the end. Even when bound for Auschwitz she manages to throw a card on the line with the message: "We left the camp singing." She died three months later.

Her diary was discovered after the war, but amazingly no publisher was found for it for more than thirty years; it eventually came out in Holland in 1981. Its translation from Dutch into English has been seamless, and one has no sense of not reading her original words.

Etty Hillesum was a member of a cultivated family. Her father was a classical scholar, one brother was a musician, another a scientist, and she herself was a graduate in Law and Slavonic Languages. When the diary opens she is twenty-seven and Holland has been under German occupation for nearly a year. She is sharing a vaguely Bohemian establishment with four friends near the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and there is talk of music and art, of food and wine and of love, and the reader can almost forget not only that there are Germans around, but that there is a war on. Realities do occasionally intrude and Etty is troubled, not by their immediate impact, but by the effect they are having on people: "hatred of Germans poisons everyone's mind . . . you must make a stand, was indignant at times, try to get to the bottom of things. But indifference and hatred is the worst thing there is." Yet she herself is not even moved to grief when she sees a sullen thug from the Gestapo terrorizing a roomful of helpless Jews. She has no hard feelings for the Gestapo officer at all, she writes, but "rather a real compassion, and would have liked to ask: 'Did you have a very unhappy childhood, has your girlfriend let you down?'"

Such passages fill the book. She shows more understanding for the oppressor than for the victim, and there were times when I could have thrown the book aside in a fit of exasperation, for I felt that she *should* have waxed indignant, and more than indignant, if not for herself then at least for the terrified Jews.

Etty might appear inhuman, but for one compellingly beautiful sentence, "I am accomplished in bed," she writes, "just about as satisfied enough I should think to be counted among the better lovers." She lives with one man, has affairs with others and becomes pregnant, but presumably miscarries - after going on a day of quinine. But even her untoward pregnancy may well be regarded as an act of defiance: a determination to live life to the full, although everything that makes life worth living is being trampled on.

A more serious frailty is her infatuation with a middle-aged psychologist and exponent of "psychoanalysis" (or the study and classification of human beings) called Julius Spier. J. G. Gaeremond, in a helpful introduction to the book, seems to like Spier very much, and even considers him a pioneer, but he will strike most readers as a charlatan, and there are moments

when even Etty sees through him and complains ineffectually of his tendency to abuse his position as a therapist. Yet, in the main, she looks on him as a sort of saviour and he is a powerful figure in her book; but she is a complex personality, in control of her emotions, and one half suspects that she willed herself into love with Spier much as she willed herself out of hatred for the Germans, or that in purging her soul of hatreds she became too accessible to love.

Her attitude to God is equally perplexing. Though nominally Jewish, her attitudes, at first, seem fairly pagan, so that when she writes, "I felt that God's world was beautiful despite everything, but its beauty was filled me with joy", she may be using the divine name figuratively. But as the months pass, God virtually takes over and begins to dominate her thoughts. Yet this is not another tortured soul turning to the heavens in *extremis*, but rather a gradual intrusion of divine light; she spends hours on her knees with prayers of her own invention, and rises with her soul renewed. Her very resilience sometimes troubles her:

Does that mean I am never sad, that I never rebel, always acquiesce, and love life no matter what the circumstances? No, far from it. I believe I know and share the many sorrows and sad circumstances that human beings can experience, but I do not deny to myself, I do not prolong such moments of agony. They pass through me, like life itself, as a broad, clear stream, they become part of that stream, and life continues. And as a result my strength is preserved, does not become tagged on to futile sorrow or rebelliousness.

And even as she writes her circumstances become more oppressive. At first the Jews are treated no worse than the Dutch, but then they are required to wear yellow stars, and once they are singled out from the rest of the population, decrees follow decrees with increasing rapidity and growing harshness. They are forbidden to drive and are banned from public transport; they have to surrender their bicycles; parks, cafés, restaurants are closed to them; they are barred from certain thoroughfares; they can only buy from Jewish shops, and then only between the hours of three and five; they cannot venture out of doors after eight or night. Finally come the round-ups and deportations, first to the Dutch camp at Westerbork, and thence to Auschwitz. All still things are mentioned in passing, incidentally, almost obliquely, like her own pregnancy, and it is only at the very end, when she is herself in Westerbork, that she emerges for a moment from her inner self to describe what is happening in the hell around her. Spier is dead by then. Her family has been rounded up and is awaiting transportation, and she herself is sick, in pain and almost unable to move, but even then she finds time for prayer; not to please, however, but in *thanksgiving*.

You have made me so rich, you God, please let me share out your heaviness with open hands. My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with you, you God, one great dialogue. Sometimes when I stand in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on your earth, my eyes fixed towards Your Heaven, tears sometimes run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude.

Job seems an ingratitude by comparison, for there does come a moment when his spirit breaks and he rails against the heavens. There comes a moment too when Etty exclaims: "God Almighty what are you doing to us?" But in the main she staggers through the valley of the shadow of death in a mood verging on euphoria. Her attitude to God is almost as irritating as her attitude to the Gestapo.

The introduction tells us that both Jews and Christians have found in Etty someone typically Jewish or typically Christian, and derisively she derives great solace from the Bible, which she carries with her to the end. But it gradually emerges that her God isn't her God; for she writes: "I repose in myself. And that part of myself, the deepest and richest part in which I repose, is what I call 'God'." In other words, the Kingdom of Heaven is within her, and persists within her in spite of her experience of the divine plan.

I have been torn by conflicting emotions in reading this book, but finally put it down with a feeling of awe. Like Job Etty revives one's faith in man, through it diminishes one's faith in God.

## Universally feminine

Phyllis Willmott

ANN OAKLEY  
*Taking It Like a Woman*  
 212pp. Cape. £7.95.  
 0224021184

Ann Oakley is the author of a number of sociological books reporting her own research on previously neglected subjects such as housework and maternity, as well as others of a more polemical - and explicitly feminist - kind. *Taking It Like a Woman* is an autobiography which aims to represent through her own life story the experiences and dilemmas of women's lives in general. Mrs Oakley uses the device of interweaving factual accounts of her experience with material which, she says, is fiction but might, it seems, be either fictionalised fact or personal fantasy. An important point is that what is "real" or "imagined" but how effective the technique has proved to be in answering the kind of question which she poses: what makes someone into a feminist? what sort of person is a feminist? how can a feminist be part of a society organized in terms of sexual difference and "the family"? what is the nature of the love between men and women? how do we deal with the fact that we're not going to live for ever? It is clear from these questions that the author was either unable or unwilling to confine herself to wholly feminist issues.

Ann Oakley had the good fortune to be (though she does not present it in this light herself) the exceptional child of exceptional parents. Her father, Richard Titmuss, was a figure of great eminence in the field of social policy. Her mother, Kay, gave up a promising career of her own to devote herself to husband and family. So Ann grew up in a stimulating intellectual environment that encouraged her precocious abilities. Long before she reached Oxford she had begun to write and by the time she left she had come through a threatened breakdown and was already married to the man she had decided, on sight, she wanted as a

husband. In the following sixteen months she wrote "two novels, fourteen short stories, six non-fiction articles, started and decided not to finish a children's history textbook and completed four different bits of research". In the next sixteen months she produced two children; it was the tension between these two parts of life which eventually were to lead her to feminism - and to a successful multi-career as feminist, sociologist and mother. To those tempted to ask what relevance such a story can possibly have for the "ordinary" woman the answer is that the book is built round the author's experience of childbirth, marriage, the death of a beloved father and a passionate love affair. Her accounts of childbirth, of the love between her and her father, the hard-won partnership with her husband, the flooding emotions and sexual passion roused by her lover (whether largely real or largely imagined) are movingly and sometimes brilliantly chronicled.

Thus the "universal" appeal of the book is not that it is about feminism (or, more precisely, one exceptional feminist) but that it is about events in the life of one woman which, despite her unordinaryness, reflect the experience of many other women. At the same time, a remarkable defect of the book is that women - apart from Ann Oakley - figure so little in it. "To be feminist means putting women first", she says; but it does not seem to be a precept she finds easy to practise. On the contrary, there is a strong impression underlying her account that women remain rivals. Her mother, for example (surely the first and most dangerous of all rivals for almost all women), is firmly placed in the shadows. Then again, no friendships with women merit more than a line here and there. Even the women who were her introduction to feminism (and therefore so crucial to her movement towards self-development and liberation) get barely a page and are treated with something more like detached disdain than gratitude or admiration. But perhaps it is time for a feminist to write more about loving men rather than fighting and hating them, and certainly in this Ann Oakley has succeeded.

## Granny in decline

James Kirkup

YASUHI INOUE  
*Chronicle of my Mother*  
 Translated by Jeon Odo Moy  
 164pp. Tokyo: Kodansha International.  
 \$14.95.

Yasushi Inoue is best known to Western readers by his brilliant novellas, *The Hunting Gun*, *The Courier-fetter* and *Obsessive*. The last-named is most relevant to the book under review, because it deals with the legends of Mount Obasute, on which in the past old people used to be abandoned to die. In *Obsessive*, Inoue treats the theme in a semi-autobiographical manner, so that the characters of the author and his old mother emerge very much as they do in this highly realistic and personal chronicle of old age.

*Chronicle of my Mother* is divided into three sections which were originally published separately, at five-year intervals: "Under the Blossoms" (1964); "The Light of the Moon" (1969); and "The Surface of the Snow" (1974). They cover the ten years or so of his mother's decline into senility that is at once pathetic, clinically factual and unexpectedly comic. Inoue records her gradual decline with great tenderness and concern, but quite without sentimentality. He begins with memories of his father's death some years before, and then moves on to his mother's apparent indifference to that father's memory. Indeed, she often refers to a couple of brilliant young men she adored in her childhood, but who died in their teens, as if they had been lost before. Her failing memory is compared to an old scratched record in which the needle, sometimes sticks, playing the same words again and again.

Inoue was fortunate in being surrounded by a large family covering several generations, so that as Granny gradually got worse and began exhibiting those devoted to her care, she could be passed from one member of the family to the next. Also, they are all well-off, so there is

no lack of material comforts for the old lady. Never once is there any question of placing her in an old people's home; the traditional Japanese devotion to and respect of the old, now rapidly disappearing, are firmly upheld in this family, in which Granny often behaves as if she had reverted to childhood, with all the charm she must have had as a little girl: "sitting primly in Japanese fashion, with her hands in her lap . . . as if this were the proper etiquette for train travel. Mother behaved with the utmost decorum." Observing her at such moments, Inoue is struck by her little-girl gravity, and also by her loneliness, as isolation is spirit as well as in time from those around her.

As Granny moves towards one of the solemn dates in a Japanese person's life, the eighty-eighth birthday, she becomes increasingly restless and troublesome. She is a great runner, and is always dashing across the garden or along the road to a relative's house at a speed her own daughter finds hard to keep up with. Her sleeplessness and ghostly night-wanderings in her nightgown, visiting the rooms of all the sleeping family in turn and snoring a pocket-torch in their faces, or stumbling along to the toilet, remind one strongly of Pumblebuck's remarkable short story on a similar theme, *Iyagane no uenrei* (first published in 1947, and beautifully translated by the late Ivan Morris as "The Hatelof Age" in the anthology *Modern Japanese Stories*). The family depicted in Niwa's story are much less kind and sympathetic towards their old mother, and their material situation, just after the war, is not as good as the Inoues'; theirs is the more common attitude today among the young towards their aged parents, and this makes Inoue's chronicle all the more valuable and telling. Inoue has always written well about desolate and lonely figures, and in this extraordinary portrait of his own mother he has surpassed himself.

The American translation, apart from a few solecisms like the now-discredited "Caucasian" (for "non-Japanese" or "American"), is excellent.

## Survival aids

Julia O'Faolain

MAYA ANGELOU  
*I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*  
 281pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.95.  
 0 86068 511 X

*I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* introduces an impressive woman. Though Maya Angelou, poet, actress, singer, dancer, journalist and black activist, does not describe her adult activities in this first instalment of her four-part autobiography, her varied talents shine in the vividly with which she evokes her childhood. This was largely spent in Stamps, Arkansas, a rural, black community which she remembers as pivoting around church, revival meetings and her grandmother's general store.

Angelou's experience seems to fall naturally into emblematic scenes such as her arrival in Stamps at the age of three with a name-tag on her wrist. Her father had shipped her home from California to be raised by a grandmother whose fondness for piety and corporal punishment might have stunned Dickens. Angelou notes without resentment that piety was a source of strength when survival was dicey and that in the old South black families were so worried for their children that discipline had to be fierce. "For this reason", she observes, "Southern Blacks until this generation could be counted among America's arch conservatives." Piety was pleasing too in that whites could be expected to fall below its standards and "spend eternity frying in the fires of hell". Thee, no doubt, such puzzling exaggerations of these standards as led to the small Angelou being whipped for saying "by the way". Jesus, explained her grandmother, was He way, so to use this expression was to take his name in vain.

A visit to her pretty mother in St Louis com-

pounds the child's bafflement. The mother works in a gambling parlour, and ethics on the city streets are worlds away from Arkansas. Bewildered by adult behaviour and perhaps too eager for affection, the eight-year-old girl is raped by her mother's lover - who is then found kicked to death behind the slaughterhouse. Unsure how responsible she is for this - her uncles probably did the kicking - she retreats into muteness and is soon shipped back to her grandmother. This episode, handled with moving tact, is the best thing in the book; Angelou has a delicate feel for the way children react to the opacity and slipperiness of the world. She is excellent too at portraying community life first in the South and later, during the war, in San Francisco, where she goes to live with her mother at a time when blacks are moving into districts freshly vacated by the interned Japanese: an ill wind.

Verve, nerve and joy in her own talents effervesce through this book. A product of the 1960s, it was first published in the US in 1969 and has the faults as well as the qualities of that decade: though brilliant with the particular, Miss Angelou can be sententious when moved to generalize. For example: "The Black female is assaulted from her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of power. . . . The fact that the adult American negro female emerges a formidable character is . . . seldom accepted as an inevitable outcome of the struggle won by survivors and deserves respect if not enthusiastic acceptance."

Is the rhetoric also inevitable, a survival aid like her grandmother's piety? In literary terms this, if so, is a pity but, after all, we put up with preachy bits in books like *Moll Flanders* and the compensatory pleasures here are no less stimulating.

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# Consciousness in practice

## Rosemary Dinnage

JACQUES BARZUN  
A Stroll With William James  
344pp. University of Chicago Press. £16.  
0226038653

Place yourself at the centre of a man's philosophic vision and you understand at once all the different things it makes him write or say. But keep outside, use your post-mortem method, try to build the philosophy out of single phrases, taking first one and then another in seeking to make them fit and of course you fail. You crawl over the thing like a myopic ant over a building, tumbling into every microscopic crack or fissure, finding nothing but inconsistencies, and never suspecting that a centre exists.

William James (he, not Jacques Barzun, is the author of the above) is so wonderfully quotable that, as Barzun says, he is now seen all too often as "a warm legend sustained by a few telling quotations". John McDermott, in an introduction to a selection of James's writings, has specifically warned against seeing him as just a fount of delightful quotations, and avoiding that philosophical centre that James refers to. But it is so much easier to patronize the lovable old grandfather of psychology who - all those years ago! imagine, before behaviourism and psychoanalysis and information theory and artificial intelligence! - rolled out so many pregnant phrases. Marvellous for his age, isn't he?

Pregnant phrases do abound in Professor Barzun's book; wherever I have underlined something I find it is James's, not Barzun's. "Probably a crab would be filled with a sense of personal outrage if it could hear us class it as a crustacean. 'I am no such thing', it would say, 'I am MYSELF, MYSELF alone.'" "I've been meeting minds so earnest and helpless that it takes them half an hour to get from one idea to its immediately adjacent next neighbour. And then they lie down on it with their whole weight and can get no farther, like a cow on a doormat." "Bad philosophy means 'utter relaxation of intellectual duty; and God will punish it if there's anything he hates, it is that kind of cozy writing.'" Another bit of Jamesiana (not in here) that is worth keeping for life is: "To sustain a representation, to think, is, in short, the only moral act, for the impulsive and the obstructed, for sane and lunatics alike." And when I face anything as fearsome as a book review on William James I recall his "slow, dead heave of the will" as I pick up my pen.

But this is quotation-hunting as warned against (though any such single quotation of his has a connection with central themes). The important question is, does Barzun in fact succeed in "placing himself at the centre" of James's philosophic vision? I believe on the whole he does, though one might want to shoot round the bulleye from slightly different angles. The book is indeed a stroll, not to say a ramble, in leisurely belletristic style that takes some getting used to after modern briskness. It allows space for digressions about aspects of the modern world that Barzun dislikes and for an exasperating number of footnotes that continually interrupt the argument with low-toned asides (James, in the age of the footnote style of writing, has far fewer and has the excuse that much of his work was transcribed from lectures). Barzun also eschews any hint of Freudian reductionism: James to him was an angel of a man, possessor of every virtue and springing from a family of unequalled harmony.

But in his loving enthusiasm (James has been a lifelong inspiration, he says) Barzun does bring out much of the essence of this venerated yet underestimated writer. Whether or not he is right in saying that everyone should read *The Principles of Psychology* right through at least once (there is some stodgy German experimentalism in it, which no reader capable of being bored, said James, could have produced), Barzun's stroll through it is always enlightening. Probably the non-psychologist reader would get more out of the shortened version - the "Journey" - in particular the chapters on "Habit", "The Stream of Consciousness", "The Self", "Attention", "The Sense of Time", and "Will". *The Principles* founded a discipline, but its sound philosophical base, its anti-scientism and clear conception of where psychology ends and psychology begins, were all too rapidly discarded by James's successors

along with difficult topics such as will and belief. It is the first and last textbook with the courage to cover every reasonably coverable aspect of human mentality within one framework, before the body of psychology was dismembered for ever. And it concludes with a summary also ignored today: that "this is no science, only the hope of a science", a subject into which "the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every joint".

A central achievement of *The Principles* Barzun sees as its presentation of consciousness: as something not composed of the sum of many little idea-chunks (lemon-taste plus sugar-taste = lemonade taste) but as a constantly moving flux on which the beam of attention plays now here, now there. "My present field of consciousness is a centre surrounded by a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious more. . . . Our full self is the whole



field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving, and can hardly begin to analyze." The feeling of thunder, for instance, is also a "feeling of silence as just gone". And many elements in the flux are not substantive so much as transitive: "We ought to say a feeling of *and*, and a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue*, or a feeling of *cold*." Even the gaps in the thought-stream have a distinct existence: "When I vainly try to recall the name of Spalding, my consciousness is far removed from what it is when I vainly try to recall the name of Bowles." And how can a thought-chunk be made out of an *intention* to say something? - yet each such intention has its separate content and feel. It is "the reinstatement of the vague and inarticulate to its proper place in our mental life" that James prides himself on.

The experienter of the stream shapes it into patterns, and eventually into an individual world-view, by the direction of his beam of attention: consciousness is thus a *function*, not an entity. And to make experience manageable he classifies, sorts, arranges, and comes up with concepts. But for James concepts are the enemy, rather than the ideal, the absolutes, the aspired-to; concepts stifle the particularity and plurality of things as they really occur, and must be given tough handling rather than reverence. Nor can they, representatives of rationality, ever be separated from feelings without artificiality: feeling and knowing go together. The contrast, as James emphasizes, is between the abstractionist and the man who lives "in the light of the world's concrete fullness".

James's Pragmatism, his particular way of assessing truth, is therefore not, says Barzun, a philosophy but a description of how the mind in practice ascertains truth: truth is "simply a collective name for verification processes", or, more briefly, it is "what works". Clearly this won't strictly do (though Barzun does not pursue the obvious difficulties); if a culture finds it satisfactory to believe that it brings the sun up each morning by singing a chant, a very special version of "truth" is in operation. That witches should be burnt alive was a workable moral truth for some time. But enough has been written by philosophers about the defects of James's version of Pragmatism when subjected to logical criteria. What Barzun stresses is how psychological is James's philosophy

(and vice versa); pragmatic verification is not a philosophical preserve but something we do all the time, as M. Jourdain spoke prose; it is an expanded definition of how we think. A proposition is not to be considered so much true as truthful, a kind of useful map. And no single theory should be taken for absolute reality; we need to take what we find useful from as many as possible. As with James's expansion of the notion of consciousness, *include* is the principle; better a flaw in logic than the exclusion of any inconvenient part of the multiplicity of experience. When, in his chapter on "The Self" in *The Principles*, he talks of the narrow people who "inure their Me", or retract it, as opposed to those who "proceed by the entirely opposite way of expansion and inclusion", we know whose side he is on. He holds out for a version of truth that includes religion as well as mathematics, poetry as well as logic.

Barzun also explores James's attitude to the influence. He rightly points to the immense influence that hypnotic and hysterical phenomena were having on current notions of mentality. Men such as Flournoy, Richet, Bleuler, Kraft-Ebbing, Binet, Charcot, and Myers were grappling with the idea that the self is not a simple, single unit but a grouping that can split and become dissociated. By the early 1890s James was already writing about the healing that can come from reconnecting isolated parts of the mind to awareness. In 1909 he heard Freud lecture at Clark University and wrote of the Viennese school that "They can't fail to throw light on human nature, but I confess [Freud] made on me personally the impression of a man obsessed with a fixed idea". James's unconscious differs from Freud's in not being sharply demarcated from the conscious, in not being fixed during childhood, and in including within it collective and transcendent aspects. And of course his lifelong interest in psychological research, about which he demonstrated his exceptional capacity to keep an open mind without anxiety, was linked with his awareness of the great expense of mental power existing beyond consciousness.

The fact that the fringe of feeling beyond conscious awareness may be more extraordinary than we realize is the key to James's cautiously positive conclusion to *The Varieties of Religious Experience* - as Barzun says, a wonderful and scholarly book and in a sense a third volume to *The Principles*, demonstrating again his extraordinary gift of open-mindedness. He understands and describes well the "religion of healthy-mindedness", the belief that defying evil makes all things well, and acknowledges its efficacy (he was aware of the successes of Christian Science and other currently fashionable "mind-cures"). But in his chapter on "The Sick Soul" that describes its opposite, the pain of the twice-born as opposed to the optimism of the once-born, it is clear that his sympathy is for the more inclusive view. The method of averting one's attention from evil, and living simply in the light of good is splendid as long as it will work. It will work with many persons; it will work far more generally than most of us are ready to suppose; and within the sphere of its successful operation there is nothing to be said against it as a religious solution. But there is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for are a genuine portion of reality; and they may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of

our eyes to the deepest levels of truth.

James's conclusion to the final question raised by *The Varieties of Religious Experience* - are they "true"? - turns back to the unconscious. This appears to extend to a "wider world of being", to "transmundane energies", to "something larger than oneself, perhaps only a larger and more godlike self"; and prayer - the pragmatic test of the argument - seems to work. So James ends *The Varieties* with a cautious assent to a vernity underlying the multi-fold experience he has described.

In this way he came to terms with the religious legacy left by his father - a kind of acceptance of it on his own very individual terms. Where Barzun is inadequate is in his smooth acceptance of the James family and the James upbringing at its face value - liberated and loving and harmonious. It would be more realistic to see William James's whole progress as a coming to terms with a strange family ethos. It was surely no simple group that produced two geniuses and three dramatic casualties. To understand both the elder brothers we need to know more about Henry Senior's Swedenborgianism, but unfortunately not much can be learnt from the almost unreadable pages of the latter's writings, edited with filial piety by William. The essence of it for Henry Senior seems to have been the relief of dropping a burden of guilt and anxiety on to the shoulders of an all-wise and all-conquering Providence. Brought up in an atmosphere of crushing Calvinism, he underwent, like William, an experience of horrific breakdown in youth. His solution was Swedenborgianism, which told him that the individual could live without an ever-present fear of sin and damnation. "I learned", he wrote to Robertson James, "to separate myself, as an entirely disinterested party, from the great conflict raging in my bosom, and leave it to God's perfect providence." The guilt, the conflict, the unresolved questions were, as it were, neatly parcelled up and passed on entire to the next generation. We may guess that the James family posed what we now call a double-bind for the children: they were to have absolute freedom - so long as they were not unhappy, guilty, hostile, or ill. But currents of guilt and unhappiness ran powerfully through the family.

Henry Junior (his he was known until his father's death) worked out his own solution. William stayed in the homeland and went through ten years of neurasthenia and vague illness culminating in his own "vastation". The description of it is well known; how suddenly at twilight "there fell upon me without any warning, just as if it came out of the darkness, a horrible fear of my own existence"; how "after this the universe was changed for me altogether" and "I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before, and that I have never felt since". Though he was brought up in perfect liberty, the ostensible cause of his years of despair was an inability to believe in free will. James had no such ready solution available to him as his father had; he was of the late, not the mid-century. But in his way he had a kind of slow conversion; he read himself into a belief in free will, found congenial work at last, and managed to start a long and tortuous courtship that ended happily. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that everything original about James is connected with his personal confrontation with nihilism: his compassionate, large-mindedness, his ability to draw lucidly on introspection, his personal philosophy of decision and experiment. The evil which healthy-mindedness refuses to account for is indeed in his case "the best key to life's significance", and "the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth". And it makes parts of *The Principles*, decidedly unlike any other psychology textbook, an undogmatic guide on how to live. The chapter on "Will" is a deeply personal document as well as an extraordinary inquiry into a neglected subject; the chapter on "The Self" a therapy for anyone baffled by the confusion of identity. "The seeker of the truest, strongest, deepest self must review the list carefully, and pick out the one on which to stake his salvation. All other selves thereupon become unreal, but the fortunes of this self are real." This is pragmatic, lived truth, not theory.

# Everything going wrong

## Bill Buford

RAYMOND CARVER  
Cathedral  
228pp. Collins. £8.95.  
0012327908

Raymond Carver's characters have names like Fat Linda, Marge, Tiny, Mac, Captain Nick and Spud. They don't make things. They can't type and never seem to read. They're without a skill in a marketplace that increasingly assumes that you have to have one. They deliver boxes or serve cocktails. They wax floors, sweep chimneys or go door-to-door selling vitamins. Not making much money, they work long hours - night shifts, split shifts, early morning shifts, two jobs at once: picking tulips, perhaps, during the day, and cleaning the inside of a drive-in restaurant in the evening. They dream a lot, but their dreams are not all that different from the day-time television they watch so much. They dream of love and sn fall in love easily - because of the colour of someone's hair or the tight fit of someone else's designer-jeans. They dream of escape, fantasizing about Arizona until they actually get

there, when they begin fantasizing about California. For a good time, the husband and wife in "Feathers", the first story in this collection, go out on a Friday night, park the Chevrolet, and dream of all the things they don't have: a new car, a washing machine, a holiday in an exotic land. Their most determined dream, though, is virtually a belief: that by working hard and doing all the right things, all the right things will happen.

But they never do. Someone loses a job, has an affair, starts drinking - something gets in the way - and then everything goes wrong. This is the never-never land of the four-colour advertisement, as seen from the vantage-point of those who are excluded from it.

This sense of being left out is present throughout Carver's stories. The central preoccupation in "Preservation" is the wish for a new refrigerator; but it's only a wish: the husband, thirty-two, made redundant and unable to find work, has resolved to spend the rest of his life reclining on the living-room sofa. In "Chef's House", an estranged couple's efforts at reconciliation come to nothing when the landlord suddenly throws them out. These stories are exceptional, however, in stating a reasonably clear relationship between cause

and lived healthy, ordinary lives. They had no children. Ironically, the lesson of many of the stories is that these characters should lay off the self-reflecting and get in some living.

Rose Tremain's collection *The Colonel's Daughter* is stranger and more varied. In her funniest story "My Love Affair With James I" an actor tries to make sense of disillusionment between recordings of voiceovers for Tiggo cat food. He gets guidance from the Eric Neasdale "Make Money by Writing" course: "Unless you actually are a blind philatelist, do not try to write about this." Rose Tremain doesn't see why philately for the blind should be off limits, nor why "what you know" shouldn't be attained through an imaginative reach for the unfamiliar as much as by a survey of the habitual.

That attitude comes as no surprise after the terrain covered in her three novels: in this collection she goes further. Five of the short stories are first-person narratives and Tremain moves convincingly from the voice of the post-termination sixteen-year-old to that of the rampant old buffer, denied a funfair on his ancestral acres: Look like a stick-in-the-mud, I know that, but I was the one who thought up the lion pit. It's the council who won't play. Curry said point, naught, naught fiddle-faddle, but what do we get in the end? Vetoes.

These near-monologues give the author the structure to achieve some of her most impressive writing. "My Wife Is a White Russian", a study in marital collision, is both moving and admirably concentrated. The invalid industrialist has angular consonants ("Toomins Valley Nickel Consortium") but a yearning heart, while his smooth-haired wife feels sympathy only for Don Giovanni and Gilda. The cool narrative tone of "Wedding Night" takes on extra force because the speaker is a twin, and at the core of the story the "I" is really "we". The boys progress from unmodesty for their mother's death to a shared lurch into adulthood via sex (how else? - this is Paris) on the night of their father's remarriage: "Thereafter they are separate."

The most ambitious venture here is the title story. In "The Colonel's Daughter" a young feminist translates her convictions from polemical to practice by burgling her parents' home, sporting-gun in hand. From a hawk's view, poised above the action, the author traces the connections between victims and the people who link themselves into the pattern by their attempts at rescue.

Tremain's prose is lush and more inventive than Godwin's, and while she is sometimes tempted into a quasi-fantasy that loses touch with its function, the risks she takes (and borrows for that) are generally rewarded. Even her incidental characters - the other, left or right - are obnoxious, ten-year-old son - are tantalizingly realized. She invests these stories with a reassuring sense of having richness to spare, while some left unexplored for how, promising much for the future.

## Plaited lives

### Joanna Motion

GAIL GODWIN  
Mr Bedford and the Muses  
229pp. Heinemann. £7.95.  
0434297518  
ROBERT TREMAIN  
The Colonel's Daughter  
174pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
02411182X

The collection *Mr Bedford and the Muses* opens with a 100-page novella and closes with an "Author's Note". In between are five short stories. Only one of these does not centre on a writer, usually female, investigating a plaited version of her work and her life. "Author's Note" certainly isn't the odd one out. There, Gail Godwin claims for herself on images already familiar from the preceding stories: the writer, in an upstairs room, rattling noise out of a typewriter to convince other people - decorators, friends, landlords, fans - that worthwhile work is in progress. She doesn't need to protest so much. Her latest collection is finer and more focused than her bingy novel *A Mother and Two Daughters*.

The recurring, writing persona has its most naked expression in "A Cultural Exchange": "Once I was twenty-one and terrified I would not get the most out of life. I wanted to marry, to travel, to be a writer." It occurs elsewhere in subtle forms: as the wonderfully enraged campus columnist in "The Angry Year" trying to prove her non-conformity by splitting about socially fashion shows; in "Amanuensis" as the blocked author whose mutually deceiving relationship with a young admirer ticks her back into activity. As we see so much of her, it's just as well that this figure is likeable, truthful and often funny.

She finds her most productive shape in "Mr Bedford". The American diarist in this novella reveals her younger self, an eager student of the world, temporarily lodged in London in the 1950s. She takes her cast of boarding-house inmates through the rituals orchestrated by their enigmatic landlords until, from a mixture of acute observation made at the time and subsequent wisdom, she has halfway puzzled them all out. Gail Godwin's preferred method of patching memory with invention works well here. She is strong in the period (Algerian war and we drove around London taking in the depressing ourselves), discerning with her characters and at her best when most self-indulgent.

The novella length suits her. In other sharp but shorter places such as "A Father's Pleasure" where the musician father's indulgence of his son extends even to handing over his second wife, Godwin collapses the end of the story almost crushing the characters off when they reach the edge of the area marked out for her attention. Paul and Liane remained mar-

ried and lived healthy, ordinary lives. They had no children. Ironically, the lesson of many of the stories is that these characters should lay off the self-reflecting and get in some living.

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Tremain's prose is lush and more inventive than Godwin's, and while she is sometimes tempted into a quasi-fantasy that loses touch with its function, the risks she takes (and borrows for that) are generally rewarded. Even her incidental characters - the other, left or right - are obnoxious, ten-year-old son - are tantalizingly realized. She invests these stories with a reassuring sense of having richness to spare, while some left unexplored for how, promising much for the future.

and effect: most seem to offer estrangement as a world-view, as if in everyone there is an inbuilt mental tendency to be hurt and alienated. In "Where I'm Calling From", the narrator, deserted by his wife and then his girlfriend, attends a retreat for alcoholics. Here he falls in love with a new friend's wife, entirely on the basis of the description of her - only to be rejected by both the new friend and the wife when she finally visits. In "Vitamins", the narrator and his wife's best friend endeavour to have an affair. At a jazz-club on their first night out, they encounter a black who, just back from the war, displays an ear he cut off in Vietnam and who then, in virtually the same drunken breath, propositions the narrator's new girlfriend: the couple leave and, filled with a sudden self-loathing, are unable to touch each other. In "The Bride", Holits, a horse-trainer who has squandered his money gambling, arrives at a hotel in Arizona. Unemployed, unengaged and uninterested, he spends his time by himself, until one day he succeeds in joining a drunken party around the swimming pool. At the urgings of his new friends, Holits dives off a nearby building into the swimming pool below: he misses and - a visual analogue to both the story's and Carver's preoccupations - splits open his forehead, literally destroyed by the company he sought.

Carver's people are adrift among the perishes and the utensils and the junk food of the consumer society. His representations of them, however, never become explicitly political, even though many of his concerns are politically suggestive. These stories are, instead, persistently passive; they are constantly telling us that this is simply the way the world is. How can you be expected to explain or place blame when you can't figure out what's hap-

## Debates with demons

### Alan Hollinghurst

SVEN DELBLANC  
Speranza  
Translated by Paul Britten Austin  
153pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.  
0 436 12680 X

Sven Delblanc's novel *Speranza* takes the form of a journal kept by a young libertarian Swedish nobleman who, while travelling to the West Indies on the *Clotho*, is struck by a gale and rescued, with his tutor and his blackamoor, by the *Speranza*. The date is 1794, and the young Count, who has thrilled from a distance to the French Revolution and formed his own cell, the Brothers of Liberty, in the provincial town of Putbus, is naturally put out to find that the freight of the *Speranza* consists entirely of slaves. Things get worse and worse, and the journal, which opens with lofty rhetorical bombast about liberty, describes in both matter and manner the moral regression of the Count, who ends up butchering and raping the cargo, his prose style deteriorating the while towards its final inarticulacy.

*Speranza* is, in a way, a novel of ideas, but one without any ideas in it. Its main concern, indeed, is to demonstrate the perpetual resistance of mankind to ideas - especially philanthropic ones. There is a debate, in the middle, between the idealistic but already doubting Count and the vicious, sophisticated Jesuit who travels with them; but this is a black parody of a real exchange of ideas, and offers a corrupt and casual gloss on the themes of lust and greed which, artfully latent from the start, grow in the end to be all-consuming. Sade replaces Rousseau as the prophet of the Revolution, so, another ship of fools is launched. But it is not only the too palpable design of the fable and its relished excesses - "a floating Europe, a Laputa of philanthropy and good intentions" - which pall. The writing is miserably thin; each journal entry being prefaced by interminable posturings designed perhaps to indicate the impact of reality on the artificial sensibility of its writer. If it is Delblanc's intention to suggest the mental poverty and windbaggy of ignorant idealists he has been cruelly successful. Fictional confessions of a third-rate sensitive mind provide their own kind of challenge to an author, but it is nothing to the demands they make on the reader. Sometimes, it must be

pening to your life? This detachment - we do nothing, it is done for us - touches everything, including the language. All of Carver's stories are told in the first person and all are narrated in a voice that is dry, unsurprised, insistently spare: the sentences seem to proceed from a state of linguistic shock. Amid events so wildly unknowable, Carver's language seems to be striving to exercise the control, however limited and fragile, achieved by simple, unadorned syntax. The narration is in fact so understated - so stripped of judgment and discrimination - that it verges constantly on irony without ever fully succumbing to it. In "Preservation", the narrator's husband succeeds in reading one passage from a book over and over again: it describes how a man has been stuck in a peat bog for 2,000 years. Elsewhere, the narrator recalls that her father saved money by buying goods at auction-houses; his last purchase was a car, so cheap he was killed when the carbon monoxide leaked through the floorboards: the car continued to run until the petrol-tank was emptied. Even the central image of the "The Bride" is very close to the ludicrous: a swimming pool is, after all, a pretty large target to miss. Carver's low-rent, bargain tales are situated between tragedy and comedy: the absurdities are recalled by an author with too much compassion to laugh.

There is no question that this collection, Carver's third, is an impressive and original achievement. There are two or three minor exceptions: "A Small, Good Thing" and "Fever", two of the longer narratives, are not written with Carver's characteristic detachment, and sink into melodrama. But those apart, *Cathedral* ought to establish his reputation as one of the most original new voices in fiction to appear from the United States for many years.

said, the numbingly repetitious fustian - all seasoned old sea-dogs, miserable jackanapes, tatterdemalion ruffians, veritable demons every man-jack of them - is winningly studded with unidiomatic phrases (the revenge, presumably, of the translator): "an angel of enchantment, with blue eyes full of wonder, a smashing refined little kid . . .", "for christ-ness, my young sir, do nothing!" There are, too, Conradian portents ("The implacable smell of death") and the prosa sometimes bulges into varicose agglomerations of metaphor: "The sea darkens from blue to black. Over it sways the great highway of the moon's golden ducats, glittering like tinsel." But by and large *Speranza* is more successful than it intends as a parable of disappointment.

JANEKSTRÖM  
The Ancestral Precipice  
221pp. Macmillan. £7.50.  
0333 354052

Miss Chnlotte Lethander summons her relatives to the old family mansion in the Swedish countryside to celebrate her ninetieth birthday. No-one refuses the invitation, since she is known to be exceedingly rich, but tensions run high between the three branches of the family, and blood soon flows. It's pleasing to find the old traditional type of detective story (complete with family tree) alive and well and living in Scandinavia; there's a fine traditional stiffness in narration and character portrayal, and an equally fine, exceedingly ingenious method of murder.

DOROTHY DUNNETT  
Dolly and the Bird of Paradise  
316pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95  
07181 22798

Rita is a dwarf-sized Scottish make-up artist with hockey player's legs. Called in to exercise her skill on the famous Natolie Sheridan, she is unwillingly drawn into the world of Dorothy Dunnett's painter-cum-intelligence agent hero, the saturnine Johnnie Johnson, owner of the yacht *Dolly*. Oodles of local colour - Madeira, Martinique, Barbados and St Lucia - and a bright, jackdaw-like narrative style might compensate for an impenetrable and implausible plot. Or might not.

T. J. Binyon



# Mortal visions

D.J. Enright

ALDOUS HUXLEY  
*Brave New World and Brave New World  
 Revisited*  
 386pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press.  
 £9.95.  
 07011 27694

Regarding *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the year of Our Lord/Our Ford/Big Brother 1984, we can have little doubt as to which is the more enjoyable novel - or which is the more earnest. They both begin on a sinister note: but Huxley then modulates into humour, even farce, into his characteristic high (if mixed) spirits, while Orwell progresses from the mildly squalid to the much worse. Huxley is plainly relishing the business of "bokoanovskification", the mass production of identical "twins" from a single egg, cosily glossed as "Podsnap's Technique", and such basic propositions as that the secret of happiness lies in liking what you have to do: children who are destined to work on rockets in space are so manipulated in embryo that "they're only truly happy when they're standing on their heads". Orwell tells much the same story, but in a tone that precludes the least hint of a smile.

"Cleanliness is next to godliness", "Ford's in his fiver, all's well in the world", the simple inversion of the past whereby to put a girl on the behind shows how conventional and trustworthy a man is and promiscuity is respectable while any sign of chastity calls for remedial treatment - this is the Huxley of the bright young novels of the 1920s. "Very difficult", he said of *Brave New World* while writing it: "I have hardly enough imagination to deal with such a subject." But wit, his popularizing gifts and agility in espousing opposing points of view sufficed instead. Along, one supposes, with rather too obvious pleasure he takes in sexual matters and manners.

Parallels with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are plainly to be expected and plain to see. So are the divergences. The Solidarity Service starts like a revivalist meeting or a spiritualist séance ("Feel how the Greater Being comes!"), turns into a conga, and ends in an "Orgy-Porgy, Ford and fun". The Two Minutes Hate involves the hurling of heavy objects at the Enemy's picture on the telescreen, an orgy of self-abasement before Big Brother ("My Saviour!"), and ends with a rhythmical chanting in which "one seemed to hear the stamping of naked feet and the throbbing of tom-toms". Huxley's world has eradicated love and constancy, Orwell's has wiped out eroticism and pleasure. But even the nastiness in Huxley - the pre-hypnopædic "famous British Museum Massacre. Two thousand culture fans gassed with dichlorethyl sulphide" - are presented in comic guise. The citizens get a kick out of seeing the Savage flagellate himself, where the other citizens are disappointed if they miss seeing the hanging of Eurasian prisoners. Huxley has great fun with his jingles, but "Under the spreading chestnut tree/I sold you and you sold me" is the most desolating thing in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Heartlessness in Huxley has as its counterpart hopelessness in Orwell.

Huxley fantasizes, lightly and ahrewdly, where Orwell is telling the truth - he had the benefit of Nazism and Stalinism - but telling more than the truth. He builds up the hate and fear basic to his vision of the future until, through his abhorrence of a world in which two and two are sometimes five and sometimes three, he makes them all-powerful, irresistible. Like Huxley's embryos, his characters are predestined - to defeat and to telling one another.

When Huxley looks about, not in the least afraid of the obvious (for instance, the Director's confrontation with his shameful world - son, John the Savage), Orwell is grim, relentless, undistracted: no "sexophones" (how Twentieth-century for him). There is nothing in his novel as corny - well, as undistilled - as the account of John the Savage's miserable childhood with his derelict mother, whose "conventional" free-and-easiness is predictably seen by the savages as gross stultification. (Though the idea of having John educate himself on Shakespeare's *Complete Works* is a bright one, providing powerfully emotive, from

inology for his connotations as well as a title.) And there is nothing in *Brave New World* as solid and as truly prophetic, in kind if not in degree, as Orwell's appendix on Newspeak. Given what has gone before, Orwell's ending - "He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" - is alas the only possible one, whereas Huxley's gives the impression that the author was running to catch the post. If, instead of hanging himself in an Othello-like fit of shame, the Savage had sweated it out, he could have got himself sent (like his friends) to one of the islands reserved for heretics - Samos or the Marquesas or, should somewhere more breezy be preferred, the Falklands. Banishment is better than vaporization.

Just as the Voice of Reason, the Voice of Good Feeling, is distinctly pleasanter than the Voice of Big Brother. Some of the elements of his brave new world engage Huxley's interest quite unsatirically: the fact, for instance, that there is no tragedy, no "high art", simply because people get what they want and don't want what they can't get; that there is no neurosis because there are no strong feelings, "no dignity of emotions" as Sybille Bedford (whose view of the book is darker than mine) puts it in her introduction; that consequently there is no war, where in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* war is permanent. Huxley may even seem half in love with this world, to judge from his civilized equivalent of Big Brother, the Controller Mustapha Mond (cf, as nomenclature, "O'Brien"), who is a philosopher (not at least a torturer), indeed the best thinker, or the only one, in the book. Mond knows temptation, he also knows, rather well, the works of Shakespeare and of other "pornographic" writers; and we incline to think it better that these should simply be banned rather than, as is predicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, suffer translation and transformation into the contrary of what they used to mean. Mond points out that there is no need in their society for nobility or heroism, themselves symptoms of political inefficiency, thus echoing a line from Brecht's *Onileo*. When the Savage wants God, poetry, danger, freedom, sin - in other words, the right to be unhappy - Mond tells him that these are part of a package deal including "the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat... the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind". The best people in the novel may not lack conviction but they are deficient in argument, and all the Savage, noble, heroic, can reply is "I claim them all." Mustapha Mond shrugs his shoulders: "You're welcome."

When Huxley wrote *Brave New World Revisited* twenty-seven years later, in 1958, he too had had the benefit of Nazism and Stalinism, and other menaces man-made or natural. He found himself "a good deal less optimistic" than when he was writing the novel, but still considered the odds "more in favour of something like *Brave New World* than of something like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*". In the context of 1948, the latter "seemed dreadfully convincing. But tyrants, after all, are mortal and circumstances change."

His afterthoughts are intelligent and well-informed - on overpopulation, the price paid for medical and technological advances, the need for order and organization and yet their dehumanizing effects, propaganda both political and commercial, brainwashing, and drugs - or "chemical persuasion" ranging from parrot to Midway. Yet the fable, *Brave New World*, is more convincing on its own terms than the think-piece, *Brave New World Revisited*, which is also vulnerable, and more so, to mortal factors and changing circumstances. As Sybille Bedford hints, our tyrannies and menaces are at least pluralistic. Neither Huxley nor Orwell allows sufficiently for human unpredictability, whether heroism or eugenic, for what Wordsworth fell back on as he worried over the evil effects arising from a thirst for "frantic novels" and "picky and unworld German Tragedies". "I should be oppressed with not dishonourable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible."

Well, go on with your biography. Jump a decade forward, or backward if you please. Examples at random of that possibility of yourself, you always come across someone you would be embarrassed (or outright ashamed) to identify with; someone you'd refuse to frequent if you weren't forced to live with him, because he happens to be yourself - yes, but there's always another dimension, another possibility. That last phrase defines one of the principal virtues of this book. Its interplay of past and present, selves, of possibility and actuality, brings about a constellation of more or less

# From the outpost

S. S. Praver

GREGOR VON REZZORI  
*Memoirs of an Anti-Semite*  
 281pp. Pan Books: Picador. £7.95 (paperback, £2.50).  
 0330 283251

Gregor von Rezzori has been around a long time. As a radio journalist, a purveyor of film-scripts and a series of satirical handbooks on post-war West German society (with delightful illustrations by himself), as a writer of chatty, allusive, autobiographically centred prose-narratives with a distinctive tone, he has gathered a devoted following in German-speaking countries without, as yet, figuring largely in academic literary history and criticism. His chief claim to fame has been, until now, the invention of a Balkan region called "Maghrebinien" - an imaginary part of the old Austro-Hungarian empire which he celebrated, Münchhausen fashion, in a series of radio features that issued, in 1953, in a volume entitled *Maghrebinische Geschichten*. He followed this up with what he himself subtitled a "Kolportageroman" - a novel from the undergrowth of literature, fit to be sold by pedlars rather than respectable bookshops - entitled *Oedipus stieg bei Stalingrad*, which has been widely admired (and sold in many bookshops) as a sociologically and linguistically accurate evocation of Berlin under National Socialism. Another novel, *Ein Hermelin in Tschernopol*, won Rezzori the Fontane Prize in 1959, and appeared in English as *The Hussar* without making a noticeable splash. It is only with *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite* that his voice has become readily audible in the English-speaking world. Described as "A Novel in Five Stories", it has been widely read in the US, and its depiction of what the title of the first story calls "skushno" - a Slavonic variety of ennui and *Weltschmerz* - has exerted a powerful appeal well beyond the borders of Maghrebia.

Rezzori comes from the same geographical area as the most highly admired poet of post-war Germany, Paul Celan: the region of Rumania which centres on Czernowitz and is generally known as the Bukovina. But though they were both German writers of Rumanian origin, hailing from one of the linguistic outposts of the late Austro-Hungarian Empire, they belonged to radically different worlds. Paul Antschel, who changed his name to Celan, was part of a Jewish community doomed to be hunted down by the Nazis and their allies, while Rezzori was born into a declining aristocracy that dreamt of a return to imperial splendours in which the Jews would revert to their medieval status. It is this opposition which is highlighted by the title *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite*.

The five interlinked stories that make up this book combine autobiographical fact with admitted fantasizing. Four of them are told in the first person by a narrator whose biography and vital dates fit those of Rezzori (born 1914) like a glove; the last has at its centre a consciousness described in the third person which is clearly continuous with that of the earlier narrator. The stories follow one another chronologically. The first, "Skushno", tells of events in and around Czernowitz in the late 1920s; the second, "Youth", is set in the Bukovina of 1933; the third, "In Löwinger's Rooming House", is again set in Bucharest and runs from 1933 to 1937 while including an important flashback to 1927 and an even more important flash-forward to 1957; the fourth, "Truth", is set in the Vienna of 1938, with flashbacks to 1932-4 and a flash-forward to 1947; the fifth, "Pravda", traces the life and reminiscences of a grey-haired *declassé* swell working for *cinéma* in the Rome of the 1960s, mulling over the past and imagining the future.

Well, go on with your biography. Jump a decade forward, or backward if you please. Examples at random of that possibility of yourself, you always come across someone you would be embarrassed (or outright ashamed) to identify with; someone you'd refuse to frequent if you weren't forced to live with him, because he happens to be yourself - yes, but there's always another dimension, another possibility. That last phrase defines one of the principal virtues of this book. Its interplay of past and present, selves, of possibility and actuality, brings about a constellation of more or less

Three of the stories contained in this volume are translated from the German; the two others, however, have been written in English by this multilingual and cosmopolitan Rumanian. Occasionally one can detect German words or phrases beneath Rezzori's English: "brav" beneath "brave", perhaps "gesunkene Fahne" beneath "sunk flag"; but his English is flexible and serviceable, and at least as idiomatic as that of his American translator.

ironic juxtapositions which governs the whole tone of the work and determines at least one of the central themes that bind the five stories together. That theme is emphasized by the very title of the final story, whose protagonist remembers how he tried to defend his right to imaginative remoulding of his past selves against the passion for undeviating devotion to ascertainable fact shown by the second of his three successive wives: *pravda* is Russian for "truth", but it is also the title of a newspaper not noted for its devotion to an undistorted picture of reality. "Truth" is a similarly revealing and ironic title. It represents the German *Treue*, chivalric loyalty, keeping faith with oneself and one's history which is also the history of one's estate or modern conditions. However pervasive the ironies are, though, the ideals that shaped notions of truth and loyalty are not cynically devalued. The reader is shown the central character's many lapses and betrayals as well as the grotesque situations into which adherence to inherited values may lead; but he is never asked to abandon ethical valuation and judgment. Indeed, the rumination on possible actions a possible self might have taken in given circumstances usefully "place" the actual self's meannesses, petty cruelties and betrayals in similar situations.

Another virtue of the book is the vividness, the solidity of specification, with which it evokes its world. Rezzori has a marvellous eye for landscapes and townscapes. By skilful selection of detail he places his readers in the Bukovina countryside and in specific districts of Budapest or Vienna, among their sights and sounds and smells. He peoples these landscapes and townscapes with groups and individuals among whom we come to move as though we too were inhabiting this strange corner of a vanished Empire, this meeting-place and collision-point of Orient and Occident. Rezzori's world is filled with things, too, with furnishings and appurtenances that reveal the character of those who own or use them. Things, people and landscapes, both in themselves and in constellation, frequently take on symbolic dimensions. These dimensions are sometimes made a little too explicit; we may occasionally be irritated by the narrator's garrulity. But this is an indelible part of the distinctive narrative voice of the novel.

Most prominent among the novel's many ironies and paradoxes is that indicated by its title. Antisemitism is shown to be endemic in the corner of the world in which the story is set; its many social varieties are chronicled, and its murderous conclusions are not only made explicit by references to Germany under the Nazis and depletions of Vienna after the Anschluss, but are also suggested by the protagonist's own acts of violence directed against a Jewish friend and a Jewish lover. Many varieties of Judaeophobia are depicted in the narrator's ambience; he chronicles a multitude of precepts, examples and experiences that propel him into antisemitism; and the depiction of his inner life includes murderous fantasies, imaginary pogroms, which the Nazis were to make a horrible reality. Yet the narrator shows himself constantly drawn to the Jews he encounters in his flight from his own doomed land-owning class left behind by a decaying Empire; the most delightful of all the characters to whom he introduces us, a modern reincarnation of Goethe's Philine called Minka, is Jewish; he even marries a Jewish wife, with whose passion for the Absolute he finds he cannot live, but who bears him a son in whom he recognizes "myself as a Jew"; and the fate he suffers as a *declassé* drifter is constantly shown to be akin to that of the very Jews whom he has been taught to despise. Racists attracted by Rezzori's title will find little comfort in this tale of an "anti-semitic manqué", a Gentile avatar of the Wandering Jew.

Three of the stories contained in this volume are translated from the German; the two others, however, have been written in English by this multilingual and cosmopolitan Rumanian. Occasionally one can detect German words or phrases beneath Rezzori's English: "brav" beneath "brave", perhaps "gesunkene Fahne" beneath "sunk flag"; but his English is flexible and serviceable, and at least as idiomatic as that of his American translator.

# Keeping the numbers down

Robert Irwin

B.F. MUSALLAM  
*Sex and Society in Islam: Birth control before the nineteenth century*  
 176pp. Cambridge University Press. £17.50.  
 0521 248744

SIXTY HORSES WEDGED IN A CHIMNEY. As with Bealcomber's sensational headline, the text to fit the title *Sex and Society in Islam* has not turned up yet: B. F. Musallam's restrictive subtitle "Birth control before the nineteenth century" appears only on the title-page. Still, it must be conceded that this pioneering study draws on a wide range of sources and has potentially important implications for the social history of the Near East. Medieval Arab texts on Islamic theology and law are cited to show that birth control was commonly regarded by such authorities as permissible and even, in certain circumstances, desirable. Beyond that, Dr Musallam argues from medical and popular literature of the period that some form of birth control - most commonly coitus interruptus - was widely used, particularly in Egypt and Syria in the late Middle Ages. If he is right, then we cannot assume that demographic trends in the Near East were dictated by a "natural fertility rate",

hitherto assumed to be common to the pre-modern Third World.

Arab writing on the subject was both extensive and remarkably frank and this has allowed Musallam to be more confident in his speculations than historians who have attempted to study birth control in pre-modern Europe. However his treatment of his sources does not always inspire confidence. To take as an example the source most likely to be familiar to a Western readership, *The Perfumed Garden* of Shaykh Nafzawi: in a section on "The means of control in erotica", Musallam tells us that Nafzawi lived in sixteenth-century Tunis. In fact he lived and wrote in the early fifteenth century. Musallam goes on to tell us that it "is available in a good English translation by Sir Richard Burton"; in fact Burton's translation was not from any Arabic original, but rather from the French of a pirated and emended version of an earlier French translation from an unknown Arabic manuscript. Musallam avoids reliance on Burton's "good" translation (wisely we may think) and prefers to use an Arabic text printed in Tunis. However, our troubles are not over once we have got back to the "original" Arabic, for the Tunis text also relies on an unidentified manuscript, but Nafzawi's *al-Rawd al-A'ir* survives in a number of manuscripts. Some of these are heavily abridged, some have clearly been added to by other later hands and

# Pernicious stimulants

Alethea Hayter

TERRY M. PARSSINEN  
*Secret Passions, Secret Remedies: Narcotic Drugs in British Society 1820-1930*  
 243pp. Manchester University Press. £21.  
 07190 95229

The connection between public opinion - even under-informed and over-excited public opinion - and reforming legislation is the nexus of *Secret Passions, Secret Remedies*, a vigorous but sober study better summed up in its sub-title than in its unnecessarily sensational title. The most original sections of the book describe how public concern about drug addiction - whipped up by descriptions by journalists, and novelists like Sax Rohmer, of white girls lured into opium dens by sinister Chinamen - reached its peak of excitement in the first twenty years of this century, just when effective government action to regulate narcotic use was at last getting under way, but when in cold fact there were comparatively few drug addicts in Britain: a few Chinese seamen who smoked opium among themselves, a few elderly morphia addicts who had got hooked as a result of medical prescriptions many years earlier, a few Bright Young Things experimenting with cocaine. It was the last who captured the headlines, but the problem of the "recreational" drug user was by then a minor one (the highest annual figure for prosecutions under the Dangerous Drugs Act in the 1920s was 300 for the whole of Britain).

What then can be deduced about the power of public opinion to promote reform? Is reforming legislation, as this study might lead one to think, more likely to be the end-product of slow-moving bureaucratic process by dedicated doctors and civil servants than by a belated wave of popular indignation? The Dangerous Drugs Act of 1920, which finally achieved control of the import and export, sale and prescription of opium, morphia, heroin and cocaine, was doggedly set going by a Home Office official, Sir Malcolm Delevingne, and as far back as 1868 it had been a Medical Officer to the Privy Council, Sir John Simon, who was responsible for the first attempt at legal regulation of dangerous drugs.

Terry M. Parssinen suggests that up to about 1870 public opinion regarded drug addiction with tolerance; he dates the opening of literary attacks on it from the publication of *Edwin Drood*; and government concern from the Poisons and Pharmacy Act of 1868. His thorough-going enquiries into medical and pharmacological journals and government records have not quite been matched by his literary researches, or he would have given more

weight to such evidence as the attacks on De Quincey for corrupting his readers, the shocked comments of Cottle and Southey on Coleridge's addiction, Carlyle's loathing of all opiates, Harriet Martineau's reference to opium as a "pernicious stimulant" and George Eliot's as "the demon Opium". The evil was not generally tolerated, but it was regarded - like many other contemporary evils - as not amenable to legislation.

*Secret Passions, Secret Remedies* has useful sections on changes in medical and self-medication practices and in the status of doctors and chemists, on the growth of the patent medicine trade, on the discovery and over-use of morphia by doctors, on the growing theory that drug addiction is a disease, not a crime, but these and other aspects of British drug addiction during the nineteenth century have already been well surveyed recently in Virginia Berridge's *Opium and the People*. Professor Parssinen's most valuable contribution is his analysis of the 1900-30 period, particularly his startling theory that when the opium trade from India to China was checked, it was replaced by a huge increase in the export of British-manufactured morphia to China (smuggled via Japan) in the second decade of this century. This hypothesis is based on convincing manufacturing and export records, and is not just what he himself calls "the grating moralism of the Americans" about British guilt over opium trading to China. This study is impartial and objective about the relative efficacy of British and American methods of controlling drug abuse, which are compared in a thoughtful "Afterword".

The book's clear and forceful style, free from jargon, should make it accessible to non-specialist readers; and students of the 1920s, now again so fashionable a period, would be fascinated by some of the real-life figures of the drug scene then - by Brilliant Chin, who dealt (impartially) in cocaine, heroin, opium and flash, used only young girls as his couriers, and was finally convicted on evidence possibly planted by the police; by Britannia Yettiram, known as "Gipsy", who passed cocaine to her customers in a pub on Shaftesbury Avenue; by the smugglers who brought in cocaine hidden in German sausages, opera-hats and even models of the Cenotaph; by actresses and dance-instructors with "bobbed golden hair" who succumbed to lethal overdoses of drugs after a Victory ball or a quarrel with a lover. By the 1930s this scene, never a wide one, had almost vanished in real life, though it still reappeared in novels like Dorothy Sayers's *Murder Must Advertise* as late as 1933. A comparison between drug addiction in life and in literature in Britain in the 1900s might tell a very different story.

some versions were produced as late as the nineteenth century. The literature of Arab erotica is an under-researched field, abounding in composite works and pseudopigrapha. (Did the venerable religious scholar of the fifteenth century, Suyuti, really write the works of pornography ascribed to him, as Musallam seems to believe?) It may be dangerous to rely on such sources for the details of medieval sexual practices.

But the precise wording used by medical and popular erotic sources must be important when it comes to assessing how effective the recommended contraceptive techniques were likely to be. My own examination of the relevant chapter in the Tunis text of Nafzawi suggests that there are real difficulties in attempting the sort of tabulation of contraceptive techniques that Musallam offers us. Too often Nafzawi and his contemporaries leave it profoundly unclear whether they are talking about contraceptive plugs or potions, whether the recommended recipe is to be tried before, during or after intercourse, and whether they are intended to sterilize or block the sperm, or alternatively kill a foetus. Recipes which would be moderately effective in one context become purely magical in another.

However, many of these problems will doubtless be resolved in a forthcoming translation of some of the key texts promised by the author. In any case since Musallam argues, surely rightly, that coitus interruptus was the technique most commonly used to limit births, such problems hardly affect the argument in his important final chapter, "Population and Middle Eastern history". After the demographic catastrophe of the Black Death in the fourteenth century the return to former population levels was slow, both in Europe and in Egypt, but it seems to have taken centuries longer in Egypt than in Europe. Why was this? Some historians have blamed Egypt's troubles on foreign invaders, nomads and bandits. Others have claimed that political and economic mismanagement by the military elite led to a flight

from the land and endemic famine. More recently it has been argued, by Michael Dols, that the Near East became the victim of recurrent visitations of pneumonic plague - a much deadlier visitor than the bubonic plagues that Europe became accustomed to in the later Middle Ages. Now Musallam points out that Muslim jurists gave unconditional sanction to coitus interruptus when times were hard and goes on to argue that the deliberate limitation of families was probably widespread in Mamluk Egypt and may well have been a factor in preventing the population returning to its former level.

It is not unlikely that some members of the urban, military and mercantile élites took advantage of the religio-legal sanction and acted in the way suggested, but that this could have been a common response in agricultural communities in a period of high infant mortality and acute labour shortage seems much less likely. A pre-Black Death population in Egypt which is unknown, a subsequent decline whose scale and duration can only be guessed at, and the interaction on the latter of a sexual practice whose popularity is hypothetical - all this may seem excessively speculative; but it is plainly worth speculating about.

There is more of interest in *Sex and Society in Islam* than can be discussed here. In many respects it is a revisionist work. It argues that Islam enabled rather than dictated family choices. It casts doubt on the alleged decline of Arab medicine in the later Middle Ages. It demonstrates the interdependence of genres of Arabic literature which superficially might seem to have been quite separate. Lovers of *curiosa* will be interested to learn what to do with ear-wax from a mule, fume from the mouth of a rutting camel and fumigations of elephant dung. Some of the concoctions seem potentially lethal and prompt the reflection that a high death rate among women attempting contraception may have been a factor in keeping Islamic populations down.

## Ruskin: The Critical Heritage

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C. G. JUNG

Translated by Jan Van Heurck

Introduction by Marie-Louise Von Franz

The Zofingia Club was a discussion group to which C. G. Jung belonged as a medical student. The five lectures he gave have survived and are published here in a supplementary volume to *The Collected Works*.  
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\* *Darwin's Plots* Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction; by Gillian Beer, continues to receive a fine press. Barbara Hardy comments in the *New Statesman*. The only problem with this book is deciding what to praise first. It must be read by the scientist, the student of Victorian thought and art and the educated person in the street.  
*07100 8606 £17.95*

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RKP







# Remainders

Eric Korn

WHEREAS divers persons, including my editor, a reader and the family systems analyst have expressed the opinion (being persons proper to express an opinion) that my prose is hard to follow and I sinne their difficulty; and whereas it is the first duty of a communications person to communicate, as it is that of a media person to meditate and a columnist to what d'ye call; and notwithstanding that poetry can communicate before it is understood, as T. Eliot stated and must have wished he hadn't, thereby opening the lid of Pandora's stable door onto a veritable Augcan mares' nest; and considering the fact that those who live by the word are in danger of perishing cold isn't it, and those who waive the rules may be not waiving but drowning; and inasmuch as a major source of obscurity is prententific proliferation or bracket-busting; NOW THEREFORE I resolve that my thought-patterns as far as any pattern is discernible shall be elucidated, clarified like glee and made transparently perspicuous by the immediate adoption of an alphanumeric polychotomously ramifying deweydecimal paragraph-indexing index, thus:

1. (More about rotten foreign poetry) or 1.1. (More about foreign rotten poetry)

1.1. "In its youth, I confess, this column thought sausages were funny", wrote Nathaniel Gubbins of the *Sunday Express*, a 1940s humorist (see 1.1.1.) now overdue for critical re-evaluation but not, hopefully (see 1.1.2.), for republication, which might prove as embarrassing as listening to Tommy Handley of ITMA whose indefatigable merriment helped to steady us and lighten our hearts through the dark days of *et cetera*.

1.1.1. Eg "For saying dot, Hans to der concentration camp haff gone"; "No, it's VI (see 1.1.1.1.) that can't eat eggs and Flo (1.1.1.2.) that can't eat fish".

1.1.1.1. What does VI stand for or how do you say it: Is it Vigh for Violet and Vee for (duhduhduhduh) Victoria? And if so what happened when Lady Violet Bonham-Carter was first introduced to Mrs Harold Nicolson?

1.1.1.2. I think it was Leonard Woolf, at the publication party for *The Journey Not the Arrival Matters*, who inadvertently sent Robert Louis Stevenson to the Cévennes. Stevenson, who had booked a fortnight's holiday at Bénidorm, was mournfully anticipating the ineffectuality of the Guardia at Alicante: "Cheer up", said his interlocutor, "Air Castle's a (see 1.1.2.1.) in-flight service is a by-word and its stewardesses' miracles of Iberian grace." The arrival lounge will be the only bad part of the trip. The journey itself, hopefully, will be much better. "Yes", mused poor old R.L.S., misunderstanding as usual; "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive".

1.1.2.1. Castle's in Spain? Castle's in the air? was their advertising slogan: "Il ne man que que style" was proposed but rejected.

1.1.2.2. There was a similar misunderstanding later when Stevenson told us he'd hired a horse for the trip; and Ralph Waldo Emerson suggested he'd be better off on his ass.

1.2. The whole question of the innately funny, the *ans ridibundum* or *lachstoff*, remains a subject for intense academic speculation and experimental effort. Cerebralists thus have been "undaken" with sets of "separated monozygotic twins" subjected under control conditions to carefully calibrated measures (see 1.2.1.) of culturally neutral (hadders going through windows, bars) or culturally detatched (beautiful downtown Burbank, Cyril Smith, the Empu totem) sure-fire hilarifiers.

1.2.1. Humour is measured on a logarithmic scale, one fact being the intensity that will raise the angle of the pericent's lips by 45° at standard temperature and pressure. For everyday purposes the decibel, which is one-tenth the perceived funniness (see 1.2.2.) is a more useful unit. Other relevant measures are the unit of humorous duration: the millijest-second, ovok and its multiples and submultiples such as the kiloyok and hillyok; the unit of source peculiarity or humorous flux: one microillud produces a level of one yuk at a distance of one hundred mares; the unit of easiness in telling jokes: the wig (Klein's *Tables of Shear Angle in Pressured Composites*).

used for standardizing, the third edition having less than 1 nanowag/page, though the fourth edition has a wry footnote after the Acknowledgments: the gaw, or inverse wag, which measures the resistance of an audience to a three second 1-deciest wit-dose (this is the International Standard Gag, not yet officially adopted).

1.2.2. Beeneuse of the logarithmic relationship between source and sensation (the Weber-Fechner or Psychophysical Law), a joke must be one hundred times as funny to produce ten times the laughter, smile or other observable response in the jokee.

1.3. There exists not even the beginning of a consensus as to whether the joke originates in the percipient, the percipient or in their interaction. The search for the absolute joke, the joke which is funny when there is no one to see it, is a piece of Platonic whinty to the Hilaro-postdeconstructuralists, whose *cahiers (Deconnerie; Ecriture Sourire/Fourire)* deserve to be better known.

1.4. J. B. Fyer, leader of the English school of empirical or stand-up humorologists, writes: "For every person at least one produces uncontrollable amusement. But there is no way of knowing if this topic is determined by the genes, in early childhood, or an instant before you read this."

1.5. In my case it seems to be Albania.

1.5.1. Look, I'm sorry about this. I'm as opposed to racial generalizations as the next man, and if I had my way all racial jokes would be about Etruscans or Elamites.

1.5.1.1. There would be no theoretical objection to using both, in the general format "One fine day/rainy evening/moon-festival an Etruscan and an Elamite met at the baths/market/laundrette."

1.5.1.1.1. For multipartite jokes, the categories of North/South/East/West Elamite (or Etruscan) are recommended; these can be subdivided as required, viz North-East Etruscan, South-West Elamite etc.

1.5.1.1.1.1. It is not recommended that this paradigm be used for joke situations involving more than twenty-eight protagonists.

1.5.1.1.1.1.a. I seem to be trapped in a regressive index.

1.5.2. Obviously there is nothing risible about any language *per se*, even one which owes its grammar to the well-known Albanian Primer of Naum Vegilharxhi.

1.5.2.1. What a boon he must be to Albanian Scrabble-players! Especially if his followers were denounced for crypto-vegilharxhizallion (triple letter points for q, x and z).

1.6. I have been getting a lot of childish amusement out of Kogo Bihiku's useful *Outline of Albanian Literature*, which was put abut by the Naim Frashëri (see 1.6.1.) Publishing House, Tirana, 1964. It is translated by Ali Cungu into sober but unidiomatic English, curiously reminiscent of the flat, fluent, confident and totally foreign enunciation of the English newreaders on Radio Tirana (see 1.6.2.).

1.6.1. "Naim Frashëri spent the early days of his life in the naturally beautiful environment of his home village, an environment that left deep, unobliterated traces in the tender heart of the poet to be."

1.6.2. I can just hear one of them uttering the words: "Bardhi's work is permeated throughout with the author's love of country and national pride. Basing his arguments on undeniable historical facts and presenting them with the consummate skill of an able dialectician who has full command of language and wit, F. Bardhi invalidated his opponent's theses (see 1.6.2.1.) and called them historically unfounded."

1.6.2.1. His opponent, needless to say, was a Bosnian Bishop who doubted Scanderbeg's Albanian ancestry.

1.7. The main theme of Albanian poetry before the establishment of socialism seems to be commiserative, thus:

1.7.1. "Now Albania how are you / Like a tree felled out of view" ("O Moji Shqipyni" by Pashko Vaso) or

1.7.2.

Never has Albanin been  
Topsy-turvy in such mess;  
Never have Albanians seen  
Ugly deeds of wickedness.

1.7.3.

And when the firing ceases  
And banners have been brought home  
Albania chopped in pieces  
Will flourish and be handsome.

1.8. Sang Naim Frashëri:

Poor Old Europe at that time  
Plunged it was in great despair  
But it started up to climb  
When Rousseau came and Voltaire.

1.8.1. That was before the foundation of the League of Prizren.

1.9. Ndre Mjeda's patriotic lyrics became more and more outspoken and actual:

He hence you vile perfidious dreg!  
Albania has discarded you:  
To Asia fly and pull the leg  
Of those you like so much to woo.

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Oliver M. Ashford was editor of the *World Meteorological Organization Bulletin* from 1952 to 1975.

Royce Banham's most recent book is *Scenes in America Deserta*, 1983.

Chaitin Bernant's most recent novel, *The House of Women*, was published last year.

Malcolm Bowle is the author of *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*, 1978.

W. M. Bray is a Reader in Latin American Archaeology in the University of London.

David E. Cooper is Reader in Philosophy at the University of Surrey.

J. Mordaunt Crook's most recent book, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*, was published in 1981.

D. J. Enright's collection of essays, *A Mania for Sentences*, was published last year.

D. W. Harding is Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh.

Alethea Hayter is the author of *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, 1968.

Robert Irwin's *The Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1517* will appear later this year.

James Jett's books include *Granuel*, 1977.

David Scott Kastan is the author of *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time*, 1981.

E. G. Knox is Director of the Health Services Research Centre at the University of Birmingham.

John Marenbon's *Early Medieval Philosophy: An Introduction* was published last year.

Paula Newall's edition of the Cornish mystery play, *The Creation of the World*, was published last year.

Julia O'Faolain's collection of stories, *Daughters of Passion*, was published last February.

D. D. R. Owen's books include *The Legend of Roland: A pageant of the middle ages*, 1973.

Brian Pippard is the author of *The Physics of Vibration*: Volume 1, 1978, and Volume II, 1982.

S. S. Frawer's most recent book, *Helpe's Jewish Comedy*, was published last year.

Simon Rae's poems appeared in *Faber's Poetry Introduction* 5, 1982.

Colin A. Roman is editor of the *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*.

David Rossand is chairman of the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University.

William Scammell's collection of poems, *A Second Life*, was published in 1982.

Hilary Spurling's *Secrets of a Woman's Heart: The later life of J. Compton-Burnett 1920-1969* will be published later this year.

Sarah Waterlow is the author of *Passage and Possibility: A study of Aristotle's modal concepts*, 1982.

Phyllis Willmott is co-author, with Susan Mayre, of *Panicles at the Centre*, which was published last year.

# Does the brain have a mind of its own?

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# Letters

T. S. Eliot

Sir, - I can assure L. C. Knights (Letters, February 10) that access to the Eliot canon is indeed difficult.

At the Royal Court Theatre, the Artistic Director Max Stafford-Clark and I were informed in a reply dated February 5, 1980, and signed by the Trustee, that we could have no access to material by or about Vivienne Haigh Wood Eliot.

The many hundreds of letters and documents of Eliot stored at Princeton University Library, and known as the Emily Hale Bequest, are sequestered until the year 2020. All such copyright, of course, remains in the possession of the Eliot Estate which, in turn, has made no decision to exercise this right.

The letters of John Hayward, and his Eliot papers, are held at King's College, Cambridge, under a stipulation that unpublished material should not be made available until the year 2030.

In recent times, the death of Hope Mirrieles placed on the market a considerable bequest of documents which shed light on the making of *Four Quartets*. The Mirrieles Trustees include Mrs D. Edmunds, Margaret Ellis and John Graham Saunders. Access to this material is mysteriously difficult.

An author, Mr Humphrey Carpenter, is in possession of diaries and papers which were the Estate of the late Mary Trevelyan. I made frequent appeals to Carpenter for access to the Trevelyan papers and was turned down. But exchange I had with Carpenter ended somewhat abruptly. Carpenter said, "This is an extremely sensitive area. Mrs Valerie Eliot will not stand for it. I have to abide by what she says."

I feel somewhat taken aback by the hysteria which greeted my play *Tom and Viv*; especially when it came from people who had not accorded me the courtesy of going to see the show. Sir Stephen Spender flew into the printed air with the announcement that "this play is inaudible, unpleasant, and of absolutely no substance". I have to note L. C. Knights' insistence in your columns that my play is "prudent delight" in an "abounding gutter", and further that "I do not think I shall feel drawn to see the play." And to pile hypocrisy on to obstructiveness, Humphrey Carpenter quoted extracts from Mary Trevelyan's diaries in a BBC broadcast this week to illustrate my failure to present Eliot in a proper light. It is my opinion that the only barbarians are the barbarians who peddle refined culture for a few.

The greatness of Eliot is that he can withstand a glimpse at both the man and the work, which I believe are indivisible.

Michael Hastings.

11 Rufus Gardens, London SW2.

Sir, - Valerie Eliot's letter (February 10) commenting on my report in "Behind the Lines" on "Michael Hastings' new play *Tom and Viv*" attributes to me an inference which is in fact that of the text I was discussing. As I wrote, "the play takes a clear line on whose decision it was to have the first Mrs Eliot certified."

Mrs Eliot also makes an editorial emendation which distorts what I wrote about the Eliot estate's acquisitions of unpublished material: "the Eliot Trustees acquire any documentary material (concerning Vivienne) that comes available." My reference was not specifically to Vivienne. Since, as Mrs Eliot's letter appears, to confirm, the estate is acquiring any material that comes available, it is naturally impossible for me, or anyone else, to know what information it might or might not contain.

ROBERT HEWSON

12 Peter Lane, London EC4.

Sir, - I have considerable sympathy with Robert Hewson's position over the Eliot play *Tom and Viv*. One can't dismiss his attitude as mere gossip-mongering, as Professor Knights does (Letters, February 10). Good poetry should reveal and not conceal; and if Eliot's poems reveal the loss of his friends in the Purges, it is his right to show what information it might or might not contain.

For the world's truly a Waste Land and

there is no hope for us outside his own solutions. The power of Eliot's poetry has helped create negative attitudes of this kind in the modern world and it is urgently important that we know their source and validity; true greatness always reveals the continuum between individual experience and society's patterns. Poetry should not be seen as a kind of Zeppelin that poets inflate above their private estates to distract students and other inquirers with the floating aerial magnificence of it and the tasteless, shiny out-of-reach untouchableness of it! PETER REDGROVE, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Sir, - It is not true, as William Baker asserts (Letters, February 10), that T. S. Eliot was still writing his "King Bolo" limericks "in the late 1950s". Almost all were written during his Harvard days and none later than 1916. Over the years he and Conrad Aiken would repeat or refer to them in conversation and correspondence.

VALERIE ELIOT, 30 Faber and Faber, 3 Queen Square, London WC1.

Michael Hastings's *Tom and Viv* is reviewed overleaf.

The British Library

Sir, - "One hears that members of the Library's staff have been wounded by these recent criticisms", E. F. D. Roberts writes in his article on the British Library (February 3). The criticisms which he mentions are Lord Thomas's pamphlet *The Case for the Round Reading Room* and, cited anonymously, "articles in the *Sunday Telegraph* and *The Times*", the latter in fact by Lord Bruce-Gardyne, the former by myself.

"One" is a notoriously selective listener and although I was sorry to learn of these hurt feelings I was also surprised: others of us have heard very different reactions from Library employees.

This is not the place to review the story of how the "British Library" was conceived and then, ten years ago, born, nor to rehearse the detailed arguments for and against the new building whose foundations are now being laid at St Pancras. But Roberts does nothing to justify the claims of the pro-building party or to refute the anti; nor does he, himself a distinguished professional librarian, ally the broader suspicion that the new building is only wanted by librarians and administrators for its own sake.

Everyone knows that the present arrangements at Bloomsbury are inefficient, although there are worse things than having to wait a day for a book (and incidentally "one hears" that even if and when the new building is finished it will not be large enough for the Library's entire stock: some of which will still have to be out-housed). On the other hand, there is plenty of room for readers. And while the problem of deterioration and the challenge of conservation are very serious it is hard to believe that they could not be solved with only a fraction of the many hundreds of millions of pounds which the St Pancras building is going to cost.

In my article I compared the Library with other organizations beginning with "British" - Leyland, Airways, Steel - whose defining characteristic is that they are run in the interests of producers, of employees, rather than of consumers. Mr Roberts only strengthens that impression. He is truly using a different language from readers at the Library with his talk of the "apex of the library system of the country", whatever quite that means, of "on-line computerized services" and of "hand-held electronic books" which "are no longer held in electronic form" (though he adds - wistfully? irritably? - that "it is too soon to envisage the end of the book as we know it"). It is hearing professional librarians talk like that which suggests to me that the new building is only wanted by librarians and administrators for its own sake.

For all the wounded feelings, Roberts knows

that he has won. The mysterious "support at the highest levels of government" has seen to that, and we are going to have the new library building whether we like it or not. But we don't like it. I offer a simple challenge to Mr Roberts, to Sir Frederick Dainton, Chairman of the Board of the Library, and to Lord Eccles, whose memorial the new building is to be. Let us hold a plebiscite or poll among readers at the Library, with no canvassing and at an unannounced date. If a majority is in favour of the St Pancras building, we on the one side will drop the subject; if a majority is against, they will stop the building.

OEOFFREY WHEATCROFT, 50 Aubert Road, London N5.

## Judging Brecht

Sir, - If Melvin Lasky (Letters, February 3) still wonders why I raised the question of the language used in that Hook-Brecht conversation of 1935, he should read Sidney Hook's letter in the same issue. For "desto mehr verdienen Sie erschossen zu werden" would have meant that Professor Hook, not the arrested politicians, deserved to be shot. That capital "S" makes third-person plural into a form of second-person singular. Even though it could quite well be an error - by the writer, his typist or even the TLS, Sir - it certainly indicates some room for confusion.

Lasky says that I don't believe Brecht made such a remark, Hook that I do. What I did not accept was your reviewer's idea that it referred to the Moscow Trials: it was for him to check Hook's reference. But yes, I do think that Brecht may have said something of the sort (and in the third-person plural), because (a) he had an undue penchant for tortuous paradoxes, (b) the remark even as Hook translates it can be interpreted in more than one way, (c) Brecht liked shocking political opponents and (d) he would anyhow not be the only artist in the world to have said "the man should be shot" without reflecting what this really means.

It's a stupid kind of thing to say, but we should not exaggerate Brecht's degree of political responsibility.

As for everything else in those two most indicative letters - the excited overstatements, the imputations of discreditable motives to myself, the choice vocabulary, the snide attitudes to a great writer - anyone still interested can (if you don't mind my saying so) check them against my new Brecht book. Meanwhile they may serve to illustrate why the 1950s-style "critical evaluation" of Brecht practised by *Encounter* rather jars when belatedly adopted by a reviewer in the TLS.

JOHN WILLET, Volta House, Windmill Hill, London NW3.

Sir, - The chilling winds of the Cold War tend to hamper any objective discussion of Bertolt Brecht. It has become a too-familiar phenomenon to see many of his critics assume the role of moral arbiter, smugly taking stock of his income, bank-accounts, passport, sex-life, sanitary habits and, above all, what he said when, to whom, before and after what.

One would think that not only Brecht's works but also his journals have well documented his political thinking - it is surprising how little of this easily obtainable knowledge finds its way into these polemics. It is a well-known fact that Brecht was no fan of Stalin; the praises of the Big Brother are few and far between. On the other hand, the poems mourning the loss of his friends in the Purges are among Brecht's most poignant and memorable - why then all this splitting of hairs from the demon's moustache? The murkiness of the "dark times" so often evoked in Brecht's poems is by no means confined to Hitler's Germany. The Webbs and Bernard Shaw (or even Winston Churchill in his wartime speeches), to name the first that come to mind, have been more or less left in peace for their openly voiced and published admiration for Stalin. Why single out "poor b.b." for fewer and far less fulsome remarks?

GEORGE EISLER, Bechardgasse 17B, A-1030 Vienna.

The *Schweizer Guide to Scotch*, reviewed in the TLS of December 23, 1983, is published by Alpbabooks, Sherborne, Dorset.

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**PHILIP GROSS**  
Familiars  
32pp. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets. £3.  
0905291468

In keeping with its title, *Summer Palaces*, Peter Scupham's last collection deals in opulence. Committed to capturing on the page the exasperating beauties and perfection of nature ("How should her creatures best express her?"), Scupham unfortunately opened his poems to the sort of diction English poetry has been trying to rid itself of since before the publication of the last Georgian anthology. Typical were lines like "First flowers work their samplers", "The horses turn their dipping carousel", "Beneath refining decibels of lark-song". *Winter Quarters*, the title of his new book, would seem to promise a sparser, bleaker poetry, and when we discover from the back of the volume that its theme is "war, rumours of war, records of past war, preparations for war, and the ever-present possibility of war in our time", we may indeed expect a more restrained exercise of Peter Scupham's considerable powers. Consider, however, the concluding lines of "Pathfinder", about listening for the bombers returning from their night raids over Germany:

From this old common ground, we cannot blame  
That dimming of the bombing waves  
Which speaks of tears, which speaks of tears and flame.

With their obvious designs on us, the repetitions in the last line cheapen what, with memories of the Falklands war still fresh, we would otherwise acknowledge as carrying a powerful emotional charge.

"Pathfinder" and other poems about a Cambridge childhood during the Second World War lead naturally into a sequence, "Conscriptions: National Service '52-'54". Peter Scupham is a great one for sequences. This one runs to twelve poems, which might be thought excessive in view of the modest three Henry Reed allowed himself in "Lessons of War". Where Reed catches poignantly the clash between the civilian mind — bored, irreverent, randily nostalgic for lost freedoms — and the brutish military by bringing the registers of the two antipathetic worlds into ironic juxtaposition, Scupham does nothing to exploit such linguistic possibilities. No creative tension is generated between the very few samples of army language: "Take his name, Sergeant, and dismiss", "Your weapons are given to you to kill the enemy", "— and Scupham's own highly exclusive brand of poetic discourse. A laboured attempt at humour pervades the sequence, along with a sort of knowing allusiveness. "Assault Course" with its opening, "Tartan is swinging, all his illusions / Oo! militant display", goes on to take in "Lieutenant Robin" and his "Balmian", "Carver / Doone, Morjesty, Alan / Quartermain, and Tom Sawyer". "Scotrics" is making better progress when "Let it all pass, ay, that's the effest way" crops up, predilecting us suddenly into the midst of Dogberry, Verges and the Watch. It's as though Scupham simply cannot perceive a situation of event without thinking of its literary analogue. Time and again, he interposes his highly literary sensibility between the reader and the subject.

It's a relief to find a more stringent approach in the later sequence, "Notes from a War Diary", where material from the diary of the poet's father-in-law is presented in refreshing telegraphese: "Evening. Took Jorry along. Dormant road. Under shelter, dodging shells for a joke". Other poems in *Winter Quarters* deal with more familiar topics — places and landscapes, painting, other writers. Those who

have developed a taste for Peter Scupham's luxuriantly rich descriptive passages and technical virtuosity will find much to enjoy here, especially, perhaps, "Fachwen: The Falls". For those who require a more robust engagement with life, the book will prove disappointing.

Much of the inspiration for the poems in Kevin Crossley-Holland's last collection, *The Dream House*, was drawn from the isolated communities and wilderness landscapes of the far north. It was a bleak collection, touched by a discomfiting unhappiness. *Time's Oriel*, coming after a gap of seven years, contains more sunlight and has a less oppressive air, though with a translation of "The Wanderer" from Old English (the poet's speciality as a translator) as a backdrop, there's no danger of unwelcome optimism breaking out: "Nothing is ever easy in the kingdom of earth... / Here possessions are fleeting, here friends are fleeting, / here man is fleeting, here kinsman is fleeting...".

Much of the strength of the original poems can be illustrated by the opening lines of "The Monk's Reflections":

Too much consistency: at last I dared  
Kick the comfortable restraints, the bells'  
Gentle hubbub, fraternal silences,  
Dispersals and reunions.

Here the pentameter is well accommodated to the dramatic speaking voice, which, while seeming to come to us across the centuries, nevertheless addresses us with a contemporary urgency. It is the sort of thing John Fuller can bring off. And there is something reminiscent

of Fuller too in poems about childhood, especially "Grandmother's Footsteps", which evokes the menace lurking in children's games.

Poems arising from visits to Bavaria and India show a widening of geographical horizons for this northward-looking poet, but Crossley-Holland still convinces most when operating on familiar territory. "Nenie", an elegy to a much-loved grandmother set against a grudging northern shoreline, displays, along with other poems confronting death, a moving directness of emotional expression without any hint of mawkishness or self-regard. *Time's Oriel* marks the welcome return of a poet whose real but unobtrusive qualities should endear him to a growing circle of readers.

"The small, consistent waves / Slip wanly at their shins", writes John Levett in one poem, and that unfortunately is rather the effect of his persistent iambs coming up the page at you. Rhythmic relentlessness, coupled with predominantly end-stopped lines and perfect rhymes, make his first collection, *Changing Sides*, a slightly laborious read. Not that it doesn't contain some good poems. "The Insect House", which won the New Statesman's Prudence Farmer Award in 1982, is an example. So too is "Freaks", which begins:

Not all of them are genuine.  
This older woman with a cock  
Has come again and shows the join,  
But then again, not all are fake...

Levett certainly has a poet's eye for where life shows the join. There's an uncomfortable poem, "A Letter from my Aunts", about the

seems best", or in the closing stanza of "Moles":

Our minor beings are not wide enough  
To let great love rear hills on their estate.  
Their scope includes the gesture and the sigh,  
But not the fire to leave them desolate.

As the volume proceeds, and we move into the 1960s and 70s, various influences work themselves out (the Movement's and the Group's; Graves' on some of the love poems, such as "Eight Investigations"), and Brownjohn's personal, finicky way with syntax is given its head, and its heart. The desire to "sublime this / Crying in verbal chorts" ("Epistemology") gets less chart-like and more authentic. "A202" does for a main road, improbably, something of what Auden does for limestone; "Lines for a Birthday", about the life and hard times of an American girl, is an enjoyable miniature novel; "Letter to America" is as delightful a love poem as "Projection" is effectively sinister. Two of the obsessions that quietly stalk the poems are insomnia and vertigo, which find a verbal counter-part, perhaps, in the poet's fondness for long sinuous sentences, choppy line-breaks, and the locations "sort-of" and "kind-of", dubious qualifiers that crop up again and again.

Someone else who crops up quite frequently is the Old Fox, first cousin to Stephen Potter's gamesman, who finds a variety of ways to outwit a hostile world. He's an appealing character,

but surely murdering your opponent in the Wimbledon final — as he does at his first appearance — is a little too melodramatic and surreal for such a staunchly empirical Anglo-Saxon as this? Elsewhere he bores committee meetings silly, arranges his own retirement present, and runs rings around the gas company's accounts department. (Look forward to hearing, at some future date, about his Oxbridge Third and his no doubt appalling love life.) The more directly satirical poems — "In Hertfordshire", "Centre Point", the long sequence "A Song of Good Life" — tend to the prosaic and predictable. On the other hand "Office Party" is both amusing and shrewd, and "William Empson at Aldermaston" ("Left and right hands worked busily together / A parliament or two / And there she stands: Twelve miles of cooling pipes...") is perhaps one of the best and most coolly intelligent poems written during the cold war, with its pinpointing, in many of its details, Malraux's high-temperature masterpiece *The Armies of the Night*.

Having abolished logical commerce between declarative and prescriptive sentences — what is and what ought to be — David Hume invented the notion of "calm passions" as the engine that powers our moral life. It is precisely the area indicated by that phrase that Brownjohn's best poems explore. "Dea ex machina", for example, wittily and tenderly takes apart, and holds together, modern relationships. "Holding Hands with Pregnant Women" — the titles get better too, as the book moves on — anatomizes, again with tender precision, the needs and fears and failures of not-so-young lovers. "A Bad Cat Poem" finds a vivid extended metaphor for sexual frustration. "The Pool" brilliantly reanimates classic intimations of powerlessness and death. Beneath the decorous surface of many of these poems, there is a deal of frustration and anger spilling and clawing its way out. One wouldn't want Brownjohn to turn confessional, but it would do him no harm, perhaps, to rattle the super-grammatical iron and learn to beat his breast a little more often.

Two more excellent poems by Brownjohn, not included here, in the Poetry Book Society's current Winter Supplement (£1.50. Available from the Poetry Book Society, 108 Piccadilly, London W1 or the Arts Council Shop, 8 Long Acre, London WC2) indicate that he is going wrong consistently better than at any other time in his career. Over a long period he has made himself into one of our very best makers, and the *Collected Poems* is a timely reminder of his unsophisticated virtues.

# A suitable case for treatment

E. G. Knox

**RUDOLF KLEIN**  
The Politics of the National Health Service  
198pp. Longman. Paperback, £4.25.  
0582296021  
**STEVE ILLIFFE**  
The NHS: A Picture of Health?  
224pp. Lawrence and Wishart. Paperback, £3.95.  
0833155739

Each of these books describes the political history of the NHS, its social origins, its early growth, the checks upon its development and its changes of direction. They give accounts of the early hopes, the later disillusionments, and of the financial and social problems. They each look at the NHS's current state and uncertain future; but they differ substantially in style and approach.

Rudolf Klein's concern is with the political process alone, which he analyses and presents in a (more or less) detached manner. Steve Illiffe approaches his theme at a lower altitude and descends occasionally to a more partisan political point of view, so that his later chapters are an exercise in advocacy as much as an analysis of options. From time to time he also raises questions of health and of health care. Klein is concerned with the wood and offers little with respect to the trees, while Illiffe dodges in and out from the margins of the forest. The million or so NHS-creatures who live within that forest will have to struggle to establish connections between their own lives and the larger political processes which these authors describe.

Klein's primary concern with political process leads him to treat the successive NHS developments as particular examples of general phenomena as they might be found in "a whole range of social, institutional and organizational experiments". His book is not about health, nor about professional activities within the health service, nor about the delivery of health care, nor the design of health-care systems, nor about any of the things which professional health workers would identify as part of their business. Successive chapters deal with the creation of the NHS, with its subsequent consolidation, with periods of change and disillusionment, and with its internal and external conflicts. Many of its later problems are attributed to unresolved early conflicts, fudged almost to the point of obliteration, but then incorporated indelibly in the service's structure. Although the names of politicians and professional people are listed, their statements quoted and their actions described, Klein's general thesis is that events spring from forces and events which in the main transcended individual actions. In human terms, the NHS's development is represented as a moving consensus established among a succession of many actors. The main movements are represented as a flight from the intolerable, down the ways of least political resistance, rather than the pursuit of a grand plan.

Illiffe's book is closer to journalism than to political history. He pays more respect to the intentions of people and committees, and to the consequences of their decisions, and less to the pressures under which they worked. He is less meticulous in his documentation; there are no references at the end of the chapters and the short bibliography of twenty-six books and papers at the end of the book is presented as "useful sources of ideas and information", rather than as specific support for the statements and arguments of the text. The continual lurchings of the NHS from crisis to crisis, and from conflict to conflict, are described well enough, together with the pushings and pullings between the financing of the NHS itself, and the stop-go economics of the country as a whole. Illiffe describes the almost random switches of emphasis between the concern for equity, efficiency, effectiveness, capital investment, salaries and wages, consumer participation, private practice, decentralization, drug bills, pay-beds, prescription charges and so on, but the political forces which determined these events are described without Klein's detachment or penetration, and with a greater credulity regarding the importance of ideological drives.

The most striking difference between the two accounts possibly is that Illiffe refers to health and health-care problems, and to the inner workings of the NHS, as if he thought they mattered, and as if some understanding of them was necessary for following the evolutionary history of the whole, while Klein makes no such concessions. How is it, then, that his book achieves the more penetrating and convincing analysis? Is there a fatal flaw in his argument, hidden by sleight-of-hand and by a superior skill in presentation? Or could it actually be true that the political issues and forces are quite disconnected from the operational objectives and functions of the NHS, and from the question of its performance? Are NHS staff justified in believing — as some undoubtedly do — that politics is an inaccessible "other world", capable of affecting their lives and work, but with which no communication is possible? On such an assessment, Illiffe's references to NHS functions would be seen as no more than diversionary and unnecessary reliefs from the study of the political processes.

There is no misunderstanding Klein's theme. The NHS is "successful", not because it improves health or controls disease or makes health-care more accessible or effective, but because it "earns its political keep". This in turn derives from the facts that a) its customers like it, and say so firmly whenever they are asked, so that governmental or party support for the NHS gains political support in return; and b) it has evolved from an organization trying to meet an open-ended commitment to provide adequate levels of care for all, to one which, through ensuring a relative fairness of distribution, "appears to make scarcity acceptable". It has developed into an efficient instrument for limiting demand. Future options are also seen in political terms, and include "less bureaucracy, less centralization, less deference to professional expertise, more self-help, more consumer participation, and more tolerance of diversity". Illiffe sees the future likewise as involving such political or confrontational issues as medical interference in social questions, centralization versus decentralization, the percentage of the GNP allocated to health care, controlling the professionals, participatory democracy, patient power... and so on. In Klein's words, "the different ideological languages are to a large extent delivering the same message". The schism is, therefore, one between political ideologies as such and a genuine concern for the standards and effectiveness of the health services.

We must be clear about the nature of the disconnection between the two fields of endeavour. We are not to infer that political decisions regarding the NHS have no effect upon sickness and health; they undoubtedly do. Decisions inimical to the effectiveness of programmes for controlling cervical cancer, or perinatal mortality or tobacco consumption can result in casualties equivalent to the loss of a battleship, of a battle fleet, or of a major military campaign. The question is rather whether considerations of life lost or health gained enter into the political processes, and whether political objectives incorporate anything at all of the tasks which a health service accepts and tries to perform. The answer seems to be that they do not, and this leads one to ask another question: if the politicians determining health policy pay no attention to health, or to health-care delivery, or its standards and effectiveness, so that they are in no position to set or to implement or to monitor health-related programmes, then who is to undertake these responsibilities? Neither of these books tells us.

The answer, strangely, is that no one does. The NHS management enquiry, conducted in 1983 under the chairmanship of Roy Griffiths, commented additionally that "If Florence Nightingale were carrying her lamp through the corridors of the DHSS today she would almost certainly be searching for the people to charge". It may not have occurred to readers unfamiliar with the inner workings of the Service, that it differs from all other nationalized industries in having no head office, no director, no board of management, no comprehensive public statements of productivity or performance, not much in the way of defined standards and no real basis whereby its relative success could be compared with alternative arrangements in

this or in other countries. For three and a half decades the politicians and civil servants of the DHSS have been unable to make up their minds whether they are simply a political office, or whether they should develop a role as an NHS Head Office. They have oscillated hopelessly between the equally unpalatable prospects of taking charge of the health services on their own account, and letting someone else do so.

Klein's picture of a service burdened by the conflicts and defects incorporated in it at birth is possibly complacent. It might be more realistic to accept that the political process initiated forty years ago, and designed to bring the NHS into being, was never really completed. The defects were built in at the conception rather than at birth, and the development became arrested in mid-gestation in a kind of perpetual loop, so that the NHS never really came into being. The process has not even now emerged from the phase of political negotiation. The "NHS" has no directorate of its own, no strategic planning office, no publicly stated health-orientated national objectives or commitments, no address and no telephone number. It exists mainly as a name on one or two Acts of Parliament. The operational position has been maintained through a scattered and changing pattern of appointed authorities, and through the devoted and largely undirected service of its million doctors, nurses, ancillary workers, administrators and other professional staff, and the liaison work — rather than the direction — of civil servants and politicians temporarily detached from their main activities.

Could this after all be the best way, so that we might contemplate another thirty years of a headless cottage industry, pursuing a variety of self-set courses in effective isolation from the political merry-go-round? Probably not. The NHS is already in bad need of repair, with morale declining among its staff, and a steady development of confrontations between the service as a whole and the government, and between different professional groups within it. It is badly in need of a period of policy development based on good sense, good intelligence and good science, and free from costly and time-consuming administrative tinkering.

The confrontational positions and future directions which Klein and Illiffe see as "options" will not help us here. They relate to another world, of committed politics, whose premises are scarcely compatible with any recognition of a need for scientific enquiry or professionally skilled analysis, with its risks of unwelcome answers and unwelcome questions. Faced with such a dilemma, those in committed positions traditionally adopt an obscurantist stance, and there is evidence in both these books that this has now happened.

Both authors identify a growth of "anti-expert" feelings in the NHS and foresee more to come along these lines; and this, in a service whose whole rationale is to provide scientifically-based expert advice on matters of health, in relation both to individuals and to populations. In this other world, the professions are char-

acterized only as interest groups, manipulating their salaries, their pecking-orders and their conditions of service; their true professional roles are almost denied. There is little mention in either book of the developments in health-services research, in the past ten years. There is almost no mention of those extensions of professional responsibilities for Public Health into the broader arena of health-care planning, embraced by the medical speciality of Community Medicine. References to the statistical and epidemiological data on which performance-measures are based, and to the professional advisory structures maintained by the DHSS and through which professionals present their views, are so disparaging ("to keep the doctors happy") that one suspects that at this point the authors have gone a little beyond objective reportage and commentary. But not very much beyond.

The pervasiveness of this obscurantism has recently been confirmed from quite a different source. The *Annual Review of Government-funded Research and Development* for 1983 gives the scale of research in a number of different areas. The DHSS is the largest-spending government department of all, yet the proportion of government-funded research allocated to it amounted only to 0.7 per cent of the total, less than the year before. It would be difficult from such evidence to infer the existence of any concern whatever for the performance of the service.

No one is nowadays so naive as to suggest that the management and development of our health services is a scientific and professional matter alone, or to deny that social and political values must play their proper part in deciding its priorities and practices. However, there is a serious need to create an environment in this country in which health objectives and the scientific measure of performance have their place, and where they can guide the decisions which must be made. If the new board of management achieves a degree of separation between the running of the service itself and the processes described in these two books, then the NHS might yet escape from the cycle of confrontation and indecision, set itself some real objectives and achieve something which many had despaired of seeing in their lifetimes.

King Edward's Hospital Fund for London has published *Health surveys in practice and in potential: a critical review of their scope and methods* (227pp. Distributed by Oxford University Press. £8.50. 0 19 724623 0) written by Ann Cartwright after a study commissioned by the SSRC, supported by it and the DHSS. Subject areas examined have ranged from the 1943-52 annual Survey of Sickness (which spanned the introduction of the NHS), and health sections of the General Household Survey, to controlled studies of tonsillectomy, or the management of hypertension by general practitioners. Among over fifty discussed, many concern the use made of health services, their acceptability and organization. Ethical questions are raised, and methodological techniques assessed.

## POETRY REVIEW

Quarterly January 1984  
a special supplement

### Alcohol

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## Hand-Shield in stucco

W. M. Bray

**MERLE GREENE ROBERTSON**  
*The Sculpture of Palenque: Volume 1, The Temple of the Inscriptions*  
115pp, plus 344 colour and black-and-white illustrations. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £108.40.  
0 691 03560 1

Palenque is neither the oldest nor the largest of the Maya cities, but by general consent it is the most beautiful. Its existence was first reported in 1773, and by 1786 Antonio del Rio was excavating there in search of gold and treasure. There is no record that he ever found any, and by today's standards his efforts did more harm than good. "By dint of perseverance", he wrote, "I effected all that was necessary to be done, so that ultimately there remained neither a window nor doorway blocked up, a partition that was not thrown down, nor a room, corridor, court, tower, nor subterranean passage in which excavations were not effected from two to three yards in depth." Subsequent visitors included most of the great names of nineteenth-century Maya exploration: Dupax, the self-styled Comte de Waldeck, Stephens and Catherwood, Charnay, Maler, and Alfred Percival Maudslay, whose magnificent illustrations of the sculpture and hieroglyphic inscriptions remained the standard work of reference until this first volume of *The Sculpture of Palenque*.

Strangely, Palenque was almost ignored during the early years of the twentieth century, a time of large-scale activity at other major sites, though popular interest revived in 1952 when the Mexican scholar Alberto Ruz made one of the most spectacular discoveries in the story of Mesoamerican archaeology. Deep inside the pyramid below the Temple of the Inscriptions he found a hidden tomb with a stone coffin containing the body of an old man and a wealth of jade ornaments. On the lid of the coffin was carved the life-sized figure of a Maya ruler on the point of descending into the realms of the Underworld, from which he would be reborn as a god. That, at least, is the orthodox view argued here by Merle Green Robertson, though the followers of Erich von Däniken will no doubt persist in their belief that the carving shows a space pilot in his cabin. For the rest of us the decipherment of the glyphic text on the sarcophagus has put the identification beyond dispute.

With the establishment of the archaeological sequence for the site by Robert and Barbara Rands, and the epigraphic research by members of the Palenque Round Table, we can now link the main periods of construction at the city with the history of its royal dynasty. The coffin inscription reveals that the tomb belongs to a ruler called Pacal, "Hand-Shield", who died in AD 683 at the age of eighty, after reigning for sixty-eight years during which Palenque rose to pre-eminence in the western lowlands. Since the decipherment of his name glyph in 1973,

King Pacal has joined Tutankhamun and Philip of Macedon on the list of distinguished archaeological corpses. It is logical, then, for this first volume to be a study of Pacal's temple and tomb. Four more volumes are promised: three dealing with the other buildings and monuments of the city, and a final volume of summary and discussion.

The aim of the series, writes Robertson, is "to combat the ravages of time by recording, before it is too late, every example of art and color from this one Moya city". Old photographs show how much damage the delicate stucco work has suffered already, and things can only get worse as the PEMEX oil wells pump their pollution into the atmosphere and the number of tourists rises every year (187,000 of them in 1977 alone). Predictably, Robertson and his colleagues have done a fine job. A good half of the book consists of plates and drawings showing every detail of the architectural decoration and the glyphic inscriptions. The illustrations are accompanied by interpretive descriptions for the specialist, and the scholarly apparatus of maps, tables, bibliography and index is all that the professional could wish.

But the book conveys enjoyment as well as information. Merle Robertson never forgets that Maya art was produced for a real world and not for a museum, and that behind these masterpieces there was a guiding human intelligence with which we can all identify. Thus, the raising of the stucco figures on pedestals is seen as a practical solution to the problem of keeping these figures in view from below, to a person approaching the temple at ground level and from a distance. Colour, too, was not arbitrary, but was coded to give symbolic information. Red was the colour of the animate world of human beings and living creatures; blue was the colour for things divine, royal or precious. Robertson describes the way in which the relief sculpture was built up, beginning with the outline drawing, then the armature, and finally the stucco modelling. The craftsman worked as if dressing a living personage. The nude body was modelled first, and then, in their correct order, the garments and jewellery. Sandals were placed on the feet, and each item of clothing was finished completely before the overlying garments or paraphernalia were added, even when the outer garments covered and concealed those underneath. Discussion ranges from the use of wooden forms (rather like movable type) for impressing glyphs into wet stucco, to the existence of lifelike portraiture, and the medical problems of the royal family: Pacal's club-foot, the hormone imbalance of the lady Resplendent Quetzal, and the six toes of Chan-Bahlum.

Throughout, the style remains quiet and sober, with no unnecessary jargon and no false drama. This is not in any way a popular book, but in a little over 100 pages it puts the colour back into those beautiful grey buildings, and makes the ruins of Palenque comprehensible in human terms. That's why every package tourist should read this book, and why it is so sad that, given its price, very few of them will.

## Holding our horses

Juliet Clutton-Brock

**J. SPRUYTTE**  
*Early Harness Systems: Experimental studies*  
Translated by Mary Littauer  
125pp, £7. A. Allen. £10.  
0 85131 376 0

For many years the pages of the journal *Ahlinia* have been enlivened by discussions on ancient systems of harnessing horses. This book may, alas, put an end to much of the controversy for, by means of practical experiments carried out over a number of years, the author has established the facts about how ancient chariots were driven.

The principal argument is whether or not ancient systems of harnessing were so inefficient that the pressure of a throat-collar could almost strangle a horse when it was required to pull too heavy a load. It has even been suggested that the inadequacy of harness was the

basis for slavery in the ancient world and that it was not until the horse collar was invented in the Middle Ages that human power was replaced by horse power.

The experiments carried out by J. Spruytte on exact replicas of ancient chariots and their harness have demonstrated with precision the degree of efficiency of two-wheeled vehicles drawn by two or four horses harnessed abreast. The attention to detail and the craftsmanship that was put into the construction of the replicas has enabled the author to present an analysis of the different methods of traction used in Ancient Egypt, Classical Greece and Ancient China. This is a complicated subject for anyone not familiar with chariots and harness but the simple descriptions and excellent line-drawings and photographs make it as clear as possible. The text has been accurately translated from the French by Mary Littauer, who has an international reputation as an expert on the history of harness and this in itself gives the book a high recommendation.

## Earliest Hampshire

D. W. Harding

**BARRY CUNLIFFE**  
*Danebury: Anatomy of an Iron Age Hillfort*  
192pp, Batsford. £14.95.  
0 7134 09983

Excavations have been in progress at Danebury hillfort in Hampshire for fifteen years. Interim reports have appeared in archaeological journals, and a full account of the first ten years' work is currently in press. The present summary is aimed at a wider audience, though in the meantime it will equally afford a valuable overview of the site and its context for students and professional archaeologists.

To strike a balance between the wealth of archaeological detail which such a sustained campaign of fieldwork yields and the simplification required of a popular account is not easy. It was achieved with conspicuous success by Leslie Alcock a decade ago in his *Cadbury-Chamelor*, for a hillfort with a similarly complex structural history, but reflecting only five years' excavation compared to Danebury's fifteen. In both cases, archaeologists must await the definitive reports before they can evaluate the stratigraphic evidence for structural phasing and ceramic sequences, and meanwhile must take on trust the main outline of the sites' history.

The design of Barry Cunliffe's *Danebury* is an attractive one, tracing the site's history in its local context from earliest times to the seventeenth century, with an extended account of its principal period of occupation in the pre-Roman Iron Age. The complexities of the site are outlined for the most part with clarity, and their significance persuasively assessed, though the momentum falters at times in discussion of the occupational sequence. The clearest demonstration of this comes in Chapter Six, where we are introduced for the first time to the stratigraphic sequence in the quarry ditches behind the ramparts, crucial to the phasing of the occupation of the interior. Phases g, h, and i are offered without explanation, and are not related to the structural periods 1-7 based on gates and ramparts, nor to ceramic phases 1-7, themselves not apparently coterminous, which are presented in Chapter Four. Elsewhere, the formulas 'Early-Late or Early, Middle, Late (a) and Late (b)' are adopted, reinforcing the need for a summary chart with the necessary correlations. Given the impossibility of providing in a popular account all the supporting detail for such a complex sequence, one wonders whether it was wise to embark on anything more than a three-phase time sequence which reflects the normal extent of archaeological comprehension.

That the author is conscious of these problems is revealed by his nervous repetition when discussing the principal house-types. "Describing the arrangement is simple but explaining it is more difficult" (p 102) is a sentiment repeated on page 116. Interpretations which seem entirely plausible to this reviewer are considered perhaps "over-elaborate" (p100 and p110) or "fin-fetched" (p100 and p104). In fact, the recovery of stake-wall and ring-groove roundhouses at Danebury – together with parallel work elsewhere – has done much to redress the bias imposed on Iron Age studies ever since the excavation of Little Woodbury in 1938-39.

A major achievement of the Danebury excavation has been the demonstration of its planned internal layout, with orderly disposition of pits, houses and granaries between a network of streets. Though less than half of the interior has been stripped so far, this has already resulted in information which could not have been inferred from the excavation of a smaller sample, and there must remain a measure of doubt about the decision taken at the end of ten seasons to excavate only 20 per cent of the pits uncovered thereafter. An example of the value of large-scale, if not total, excavation is the evidence from human and animal burials at Danebury. Hitherto, inhumations or partial remains of skeletons from hillfort or settlement excavations, if not in a recognizable cemetery, have been regarded as the result of casual or irregular disposal of social outcasts or the like. At Danebury 100 pits, or 10 per cent



A nymph, possibly Supraba who came to earth to tempt ascetics; taken from Bali, The Split Gate to Heaven (129pp, Orbis. £12.50. 0 856135133).

of the total opened in the first ten years, contained human remains, including deliberate dismemberments and burials of selected bones, while 5 per cent contained complete animal burials, in circumstances indicative of variety of ritual practices. Particularly intriguing is the occurrence of a number of ravens, a bird of ominous significance in Celtic literature and mythology.

A second major product of the Danebury programme will be its ceramic sequence, based upon the associations of several hundred pit-groups, and apparently reinforced by radiocarbon dating. The outline offered here seems to conform in general terms to the accepted typological sequence from haematite-coated bowls and coarse jars, through "saucer-pot" pots and related forms with shallow-tooled ornament, to wheel-thrown wares in the final pre-Roman phase. How this sequence is subdivided, and how far the integrity of ceramic phases 1-7 is endorsed by carbon-14 dates remains to be seen in the definitive report, but it is hard to understand at this stage how limits of fifty or even 100 years for the phases outlined on p 66 can be sustained by the dates plotted on Figure 27, especially given the extreme irregularities of the current calibration curves for the later first millennium.

Finally, the scale of the Danebury excavation makes possible inferences regarding the economic and social structure of the site, based principally upon estimates of its grain storage capacity and potential for wool production, but including also, for example, evidence of its role in the redistribution of salt. In this section, the meaning of the histogram (Fig 74), which purports to show the relative age at death of the Danebury giant sheep (or are they dwarf cattle?), will be totally obscure to the general reader who is unfamiliar with the use of "age stages" instead of months or years in the vertical scale, but the general message is clear. A particular achievement of the Danebury exercise is the intensive air and ground survey of the adjacent landscape, which provides a unique opportunity to study the functioning of hillfort in context, and affords an archaeological basis for the social models tentatively advanced in Chapter Nine. The use of early Irish and classical sources may not satisfy those who prefer to study European protohistory in terms of Marxist economics and modern anthropological theory, but is doubtless, due to the fact that the author, as the dustjacket explains, besides being director of the Danebury excavation, also earns a crust as Professor of European Archaeology at Oxford, where archaeology, mercifully, is not just anonymous with palaeozoology.

## Association of arts

J. Mordaunt Crook

**SUSAN BEATTIE**  
*The New Sculpture*  
272pp, with black-and-white illustrations.  
Yale University Press. £30.  
0 300 02860 1

"Sculpture is the voice of architecture," C. R. Cockerell's dictum might stand as an epigraph to the latest sumptuous volume from the Paul Mellon Centre and Yale University Press. For the principal theme of Susan Beattie's *The New Sculpture* is the emancipation of English sculptors between the 1870s and the 1890s: emancipation from the restricting conventions of Neo-Classicism, thanks to the integration of sculpture with architectural design and decoration during successive late Victorian revivals, Queen Anne, mixed Renaissance and Baroque. Dr Beattie sums up as follows:

Architects and sculptors were united during the last decades of the nineteenth century by their longing to express a personal and unique identity. Among architects this need was commonly rationalised as a determination to develop a specifically 'modern' style, to broaden and sharpen observation of past tradition and to make it seem relevant to the present day. . . . Sculptors too began to see the historical development of their art in a new light and found, in the quattrocento, justification for their own search beyond received notions of classical beauty for the expression of 'self'.

Such objectives were the antithesis of Neo-Classicism. Neo-Classical sculpture operated on mimetic rather than expressive principles. Its object was abstraction rather than identity. The only way to become great, Winckelmann had written, "is to imitate antiquity" – imitation, of course, implying not plagiarism but distillation. These were the views of the Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy between 1868 and 1876, Henry Weekes. He had worked with Chantrey, and Flaxman was his idol. In his lectures at the Academy Schools he maintained the ideals of Neo-Classicism right through the High Victorian period: gravity, abstraction, clarity, repose and above all a "worldly universal" beauty – not for him the familiarity, the domesticity or the mysticism of the Pre-Raphaelites; still less the passionate realism of Michelangelo. For example, Weekes believed that Michelangelo's "David" carried truth "to the point which becomes offensive, which destroys the elegance of the statue, and conveys the idea of rude fact instead of abstract truth". It was against such sublimities as these that the New Sculptors – Alfred Gilbert, Harry Bates, George Frampton, Hamo Thornycroft, Alfred Drury, Onslow Ford, Frederick Pomeroy – set up their standard of rebellion. Shrugging off stereotyped allegories, they set out to explore the mysteries of the human psyche through the medium of symbolist imagery. "When art languishes", wrote Victor Hugo, "a return to nature is prescribed." Alfred Stevens had been the movement's "morning star", calling in Italy to dilute the dominance of Greece. When Frederick Leighton became President of the Royal Academy in 1878, the Neo-Classical enemy was in full retreat. And when Alfred Gilbert – Rodin's "English Cellini" – was eventually elected to the long-vacant Chair of Sculpture in 1900, the revolution was complete. In the endless dialogue between classic and mimetic impulses, Romanticism had scored another victory.

French masters, notably Daubigny and Mercier, may have provided inspiration, but it was the mondaque work of architectural decoration which supplied the route by which these late Victorian sculptors managed to escape the Neo-Classical stranglehold. "The drifting apart of Architecture, Painting and Sculpture", Lethaby explained in 1883, "is shown in the one hand in the trade decorations of our buildings, on the other in the subject painting and portrait sculpture of our Galleries. But any real Art-revival can only be on the lines of the Unity of the aesthetic Arts." "It seems to me", Beresford Pite told the RIBA in 1897, "that the time has arrived when perhaps the introduction of a little architectural vaccine in the arms of the sculptor, and the influence of a little sculptor's blood in the veins of the architect might produce a mongrel sculptor-architect or a true sculptor of a distinctly strong breed."

And integration had to be total if it were to be fruitful. "It is not enough", contended Henry Wilson, "to have panels to fill and fringes to flounder in; the sculptor ought to be in at the very birth of the building and advise on the arrangement of the mass and the distribution of light and shade." In 1897 Alfred Waterhouse – always a safe barometer of taste – summed up the now established view: "In the highest periods of art the best sculpture was undoubtedly associated with the best architecture."

So, while architects progressed from the Queen Anne Revival to what Goodhart-Rendel christened "Bric-à-brac Renaissance", and thence from Imperial Baroque to European Beaux-Arts, the New Sculptors made good use of their new opportunities. "The transformation of architectural carving and modelling", argues Beattie, "from anonymous, scarcely noticed craft to dynamic, seductive art was the greatest collective achievement of the New Sculptors and one of the most rational expressions of Arts and Crafts ideals in 19th-c. history". Harry Bates's flowing terracotta friezes at Hill's Bakery, 60 Buckingham Gate, Westminster (designed by Thomas Verity, 1887, demolished 1980); Hamo Thornycroft's epoch-making panels at the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Moorgate Place, City of London (designed by John Belcher and A. Beresford Pite, 1888-93); Alfred Drury's colossal groups in stone at the War Office, Whitehall (designed by William and Clyde Young, 1898-1905) – all these demonstrated not only individual virtuosity but that expansion of the functional boundaries of sculpture which was one of the principal aims of the whole movement.

Alas, it was a movement which disintegrated at exactly the point which should have marked its culmination: the decoration of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Intended to represent the apotheosis of the unity between architecture and sculpture, Aston Webb's uncoordinated colossal succeeded only in turning the statues along Brompton Road into "ornaments on a mantelpiece". By the turn of the century, in fact, architecture and sculpture were once again heading in different directions. The strange, chrysephantine marvels produced by Bates, Frampton and Reynolds-Stephens – "Lania" (1899), "Mysteriarch" (1892), "Mors Janua Vitae" (1899), "Guinevere's Redeeming" (1900) – were worlds apart from Aston Webb's Imperial vision. And nothing could look more anomalous than Pomeroy's baroque figure of "Architecture" (1905)

## Frozen facets

Reyner Banham

**FRED ANDERES and ANN AGRANOFF**  
*Ice Palaces*  
132pp, with 50 colour and 100 black-and-white illustrations. New York: Abbeville Press.  
\$29.95 (paperback \$16.95).  
0 89659 391 6

What must have sounded like a good idea – a marvellous idea – has gone wrong in *Ice Palaces*. The title conjures up irresistible fairy-tale visions of glittering architectural fantasies in landscapes of ethereal white, and the dust-jacket illustration and the frontispiece sustain the promise. But hardly anything else does; against all odds, it must seem, the authors have contrived to produce a pretty dull book.

Part of the trouble is in the writing, for which an old-fashioned adjective would be "exerbic". Chapters and sections often begin with passages as bad as:

The year 1894 was a time of trouble in some parts of the world; China and Japan went to war; Captain Alfred Dreyfus was unjustly convicted of treason in France; and 20,000 unemployed workers marched on Washington. To Quebec, however, it was the year of "the most remarkable Carnival of the nineteenth century."

and the prose is everywhere laboured and curiously disjointed.

The text seems to cover the subject fairly thoroughly. Diligent research has clearly gone into amassing the material, but equally clearly there proved not to be very much of it, so Fred Andres and Ann Agranoff have crammed it all in, from the Empress Anna's glacial wed-

pinned uncomfortably to the steel rivets of Vauxhall Bridge. By 1906 the building boom was over and Edwardian Baroque had reached its peak. By 1910 architects had begun to lose faith in Arts and Crafts ideals and in the possibility of developing a genuinely "free" style through a synthesis of historic forms. Beaux-Arts classicism and steel-framed construction, as well as the dictates of economy, had begun to make autonomous sculptural decoration seem unnecessary and even irrelevant. Clearly the balance of taste was about to swing once more: down with romantic expressionism; up with the rationalist ethic of the Modern Movement.

In grappling with the elusive aesthetics of figurative sculpture, Beattie seizes upon one of Coleridge's more enigmatic dicta: "a great mind must be androgynous." Coleridge had been quoted by Walter Shaw Sparrow in 1901 *vis à vis* George Frampton's "St Mungo" (1897-1901) at Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum: "To put the truth plainly, Mr Frampton has here achieved that fine harmony of masculine and feminine qualities which ought always to be present in the work done by an artist of genius, for the reason that genius itself is neither masculine nor feminine, but each and both . . . [unlike] the neuter style of Beardsley." There is certainly something bisexual in the root of symbolist art: Gilbert's statuette of the Clarence tomb at Windsor (1899 etc.), are a notable example. Hence the difficulty of expressing symbolist ideas through the medium of the nude; hence too the disintegrative impact of *fin de siècle* sensuality on the New Sculpture as a unified movement. "Sexual polarisation", notes Beattie, "curiously and mercifully in abeyance in England during the last decades of the 19th c., had by 1905 already begun the 'fatal' erosion of aesthetic values that Virginia Woolf was to describe and abominate during the 1920s." At this point the 'Australian-born sculptor Bertram Mackennal is introduced as the villain of the piece: his "Dawn of a New Age" (1924) is certainly as assertively masculine as his vanished ten-foot bronze "For she sitteth on a seat in the high places of the city" (1894) is neurotically feminine. But this "polarising" tendency is visible in others too: compared with Alfred Drury's subtly languorous "Evening" (1898), Charles Hartwell's "Dawn" (1900-14) seems precariously close to pornography. Of course, little of this emerges in the writings of the sculptors themselves. Indeed nineteenth-century sculptors were hardly noted for their theorizing. "The fact is", explained Frederick Pomeroy

ding-pavilion (not for herself, however) on the Neva in 1740, to some futuristic speculations about a domed ski-lodge formed of very thin ice-shells. The trouble, however, seems to lie less with the dismal writing and ineffective editing, than with the illustrations, which are almost all old photographs of unimaginative old buildings. Since ice palaces were, inevitably, built in the winter, the photographers had to cope with short days of poor light; most of them were built in the last quarter of the last century, when emulsions were slower than today, and all seem to have been printed on paper that has not conserved very well.

If the pictures were better, though, they would reveal even more clearly how – even as late as the Art Deco 1930s – the architects clung to a lumpy and uninspired castellated mode, about which the only thing remarkable was that the buildings were of ice, not (as the pictures seem to show) granite masonry. For this there may have been good technical reasons, connected with the cutting and handling of large blocks of lake ice, though arches, round or pointed, clearly could be made. A more likely reason seems to be a purely human one: most of the examples from the United States and Canada, which make up the bulk of the book, were the product of a single "dynasty" of architects whose inspiration (direct or at one remove) had been the Parliament buildings in Ottawa, when which it would be difficult to think of a less inspiring source of inspiration!

Even that, however, cannot do much to explain the depressing tendency of later revivals of the ice-palace idea. In the 1940s even, to

in 1898, "that to put into writing anything pertaining to one's art is more difficult than making a statue."

Nothing illustrates more vividly the changing status of the New Sculpture among cognoscenti than the curious story of Onslow Ford's monument to Lord Strathairn. Commissioned in 1891, and paid for by a public subscription of £3,500, Ford's equestrian bronze was set up in 1895 at the junction of Knightsbridge and Brompton Road. Thirty-six years later it was removed during the construction of Knightsbridge underground station and placed in store. There it remained for another thirty-six years, something of an embarrassment to its custodians. Meanwhile, taste changed again. In 1968 newspaper protests forced Lord Strathairn back into the public eye. His statue was sold to a private collector, and now it stands – oddly imperious – in a sylvan setting in Hampshire.

Other statues have been less fortunate. The eclipse of the New Sculpture between the wars – indeed until the pioneering work of Lavinia Handley-Read in the 1960s – has consigned many a prize-winning piece to oblivion. Where is George Frampton's winsome "Christohel" (1889)? Or his haunting has-relief, "My Thoughts are my Children" (1894)? Where is Pomeroy's "Pensée" (1895)? Or Pegrarn's "Fortune" (1900)? Or Fehr's "St George and the Rescued Maiden" (1898)? Where, for that matter, is Alfred Drury's enigmatic "Prophets of Fate" (1899)? Or Harry Bates's sad-eyed "Rhodope" (1877)? All these, alas, and others too, continue to bear the label PLU (Present Location Unknown).

Beattie's enthusiasm for her subject makes her perhaps too selective. She avoids, for example, dealing with the movement's declining years: Drury's unimpressive "Reynolds" in the courtyard of Burlington House (1931); Frampton's saccharine "Peter Pan" (1910) in Kensington Gardens; the same sculptor's starchy "Edith Cavell" (1920); or those anaemic lions (1914) at the south entrance to the British Museum. She is too hard on the rapid conventions of Neo-Classicism, and not hard enough on the febrile excesses of some of the New Sculptors. She omits altogether any discussion of Gothic Revival or Pre-Raphaelite sculpture: its influence, negatively or positively, on what came afterwards deserves some consideration. Even so, there are riches here. The illustrations are well chosen. The index is admirable. The text is as carefully wrought as a Gilbert statuette. In short, there is little or nothing for professional nitpickers.

revert grimly to the same old style, at least in St Paul, Minnesota, which is still the place that comes to most American minds when ice-palaces are mentioned (at least in my hearing). And such calling to mind is nearly always linked to some commentary on the dullness of the work.

One has to conclude that the founders of the stylistic dynasty had little sense of the optical qualities that could be achieved in building with such a material. Only one illustration, a splendid pair of stereoscopes of an arched entrance to the St Paul palace of 1887, gives any idea of how magical the effect of this green-candy translucency – a masonry construction apparently glowing with inner light – could be. That one picture sets a standard – photographic and architectural – by which the rest of the book falls. Until, that is, one comes to the Japanese work for the Sapporo Snow Festivals from 1950 onwards (which also provide the cover and frontispiece illustrations) and audaciously, in proper pantomime manner, there is a transformation scene. Modern colour photography and modern artificial lighting reveal a visual sensibility that understands the potential of building in ice. Even when the palaces imitate fairly dull Western buildings, the book, were the product of a single "dynasty" of architects whose inspiration (direct or at one remove) had been the Parliament buildings in Ottawa, when which it would be difficult to think of a less inspiring source of inspiration!

Even that, however, cannot do much to explain the depressing tendency of later revivals of the ice-palace idea. In the 1940s even, to

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# In pursuit of intimacy

Paula Neuss

**PETER DRONKE**  
*Woman Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Perote*  
338pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50 (paperback, £10.95).  
0521 255805

According to the Wife of Bath, if medieval women had written stories "They wolde han writen of men moore wikkedness / Than al the mark of Adam may redress", but of course, she implies, men have made sure that women don't know how to write, so as to protect themselves. To the multiple ironies in Chaucer's portrayal of this "liberated" woman we can now, thanks to Peter Dronke, add a new one: there were in fact many women, from Perpetua onwards, who could write, and very few of them seem to have intentionally written anything about the wickedness of men. Perpetua and Marguerite Perote were both put to death for their beliefs; Perpetua's father tries to persuade her to recant, veering from violence ("he bore down upon me as if he would pluck out my eyes") to blackmail ("have pity on my white hairs") but she sees all this as being done out of devotion; Marguerite, a mystic, presents an erotic picture of divine love in which, among more blissful things, the soul imagines a series of cruel tests by her lover, "torments that she would gladly accept if they were her beloved's will".

The assumption that medieval women couldn't write has been widely held. "Distinguished older scholars" suggested, for example, that Hrotsvitha's works were a hoax; that Hildegard of Bingen's vast output must have been composed by her male secretaries; that St Jerome wrote the letters signed by his protégées Paula and Eustochium; that the "poetic reply" of Constance (a young eleventh-century nun) was fabricated by her lover; that Héloïse's third letter was written by Abelard. Mr Dronke shows that these women were indeed the authors of what they said they wrote, and were often influential. Although Héloïse was twenty years younger than Abelard, he may have learned from her: "it would seem that Abelard assimilated to quite an extent Héloïse's habit in the epistolary style, rather than the other way round". Dronke thinks that his discovery may cause scholars "surprise or even alarm" but I suspect there are many female scholars who will not be at all surprised by it.

These women tried to find a personal style in which to express their intimate thoughts and feelings. Until about the middle of the twelfth century Latin was *de rigueur*, and when women tried to escape its rigidity, and the rhetorical rules of composition, they would be accused of writing badly when they were simply trying to say what they meant. The Carolingian *Dhuoda* (born about 803) wrote unconventional Latin "because she was urgently striving to say something in her own way, something that was truly hers". Desperately lonely, abandoned by her husband who took their baby with him, she wrote a handbook for her other, sixteen-year-old son, in which she tried to express her love and longing through experiments with form and style, even playing with the rules of grammar to show how they mirror relationships.

If you love them in the singular, they will love you in the plural: it is written in the *Art* (of Grammar) of the poet Donatus: "I love you and am loved by you, I kiss you and am kissed by you."

On the other hand, women could write according to the rule-book if they chose. Hrotsvitha "modestly" refers in her prefaces to her feminine inability to compose verses correctly, but the suggestion that writing in classical metres is especially hard for women because they are frail is deliberately preposterous and is said tongue-in-cheek. Hrotsvitha did not have to imitate Terence: Dronke also rescues Hrotsvitha from the dry scholars who consider that she could not have intended her plays for performance: it seems inconceivable that anybody, even a tenth-century canoness, should have composed a large number of plays without hoping that one or two would be staged. Hrotsvitha came from a cultured milieu, as inevitably did most of the women whose writ-

ing Dronke discusses. Where there are hints of the thoughts and feelings of unlettered women these have been written by men. The testimony of Grazia Lizer of Montaillois was taken down by the official inquisitor, but some of her character comes through "the painfully awkward Latin of the official record" and Grazia's comments on her joy and lack of guilt in love-making with Pierre Clergue (though she was married and he was the rector) contrast alarmingly with the painful ecstasies described by a mystic such as Angela of Foligno "undressing before the sculpture of Christ so as to offer her body to him" or Hildegard of Bingen's attempt to project a "wholly positive theology of sex" while presumably knowing little about it in practice.

Since most women wrote in the shadow of the Church's teaching, the surviving writings by "secular" women such as the Provençal *trobaritz* are especially interesting. Dronke compares the image they project to that of Bardot in *Et Dieu créa la femme* as discussed by Simone de Beauvoir – that of a woman who expresses her desires openly and chooses her

man. In the most striking of their poems, however (a discussion about love and marriage between three women which foreshadows Dunbar), it is not desire so much as disgust at the results of having children (pendulous breasts and wrinkled belly) that emerges. The *trobaritz* come closest to emancipation in their writing, yet ironically in a poem by a Provençal Lesbian, Biers, "diction and outlook are hard to distinguish from those of men's poetry".

As Dronke observes, the number of studies of "medieval women" goes on increasing, but "the greater part of what survives by medieval women has remained virtually unknown". This is partly because of the inaccessibility of texts, and it is a rare person who can not only track down the material, in medieval Latin, Provençal, Anglo-Norman or whatever, but also read it with careful attention and then translate it so that other people can appreciate it. This must be one of the best books on women's writing. Mr Dronke is like the Chaucer who took such pains, in his *Legend of Good Women*, to write in the service of women, literature, elegance and wit.



The letters "m" by "E.S.", an artist-engraver working in Germany and the Low Countries in the mid-fifteenth century, taken from *Ornamental Alphabets and Initials* by Alison Harding (96pp. Thames and Hudson. £4.95. 0500 273138).

## Missing the hoof-beats

D. D. R. Owen

**C. H. Sisson** (Translator)  
*The Song of Roland*  
135pp. Manchester: Carcanet Press. £7.95.  
0 85635 421 X

In my review of C. H. Sisson's *Song of Roland* as broadcast on Radio 3 (TLS, November 3, 1982) I commented on various inaccurate or inappropriate renderings and regretted above all the undermining of the epic's essential dignity on the level of both sense and sound. The printed version shows minor differences from the radio script (not always in the interests of accuracy – Marsile's offer of ten or twenty hostages has become a munificent ten or twenty thousand!) and is prefaced by a succinct introduction to both legend and poem and by some observations on the principles of translation.

Choices, not rules, face the translator of a masterpiece from a long-dead genre; and for the *Roland* I see three basic alternatives. There is the literal prose rendering, useful as a "crib", but sacrificing most of the vital oratorical dimension. Then there is "modernization", which subordinates accuracy to interpretation, transposing the work into a modern idiom and perhaps into a form such as drama more accessible to our dulled powers of reception. Most challenging is the attempt to re-create to the highest possible degree the original experience, feeding not the mind alone, but also the inner ear, with echoes of the verse's majestic music.

Sisson's solution is a compromise. He rightly rejects "a garbled and sham antique language which no one ever spoke". On the other hand, he sometimes goes to the opposite extreme by slipping in quite inappropriate

modern colloquialism: Roland, addressing Oliver as "old son"; Charlemagne being "not quick to use his mouth" in council, whereas a pagan, less reticent, "now talks big about what he'll do / To the old country: slap her down...". This I find no less disturbing than contrived archaisms.

As for the form, Sisson says there can be no question of imitating that of the *Chanson*. Why? "The classic line in French is of twelve syllables, and it is this which corresponds to the classic English line of ten syllables. The ten-syllable line in French is a *short line*, and the nearest equivalent in English is the line of eight syllables. A great deal more of the speed of the original... is lost by ignoring this point." So he uses "a basic octosyllabic couplet, but however counting on my fingers for every line". The choice is unfortunate and based on a misconception.

The Old French epic decasyllable is not a short line when compared with the octosyllabic couplet favoured by most other genres, including the romance, fabliau and comic theatre. With its regular 4 + 6 beat and room for formulaic orchestration, it was more capable than the tripping octosyllable of stirring epic emotions. Paradoxically, the shorter line can also slow the pace, as poet or translator resorts to padding to achieve rhythm or rhyme. Thus a single French decasyllable becomes with Sisson: "You Frankish knights," says the emperor / And rather pointedly ignores / The archbishop (the words I italicize correspond to nothing in the original).

The *Roland* is so highly crafted that adequate translation is impossible; and even when reading it in the twelfth-century French, we are still left to imagine the experience of a living performance. In this version we catch too seldom the thrilling pulse of the work: the hoof-beats and the heart-beats.

## Signs of tension

Denton Fox

**ELIZABETH SALTER**  
*Fourteenth-Century English Poetry: Contexts and Readings*  
Edited by Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman  
224pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £19.50.  
0 1981186 X

Elizabeth Salter's editors explain that she began this book in about 1972, and then four years before her death in 1980 started to rewrite completely the opening chapters. This volume is drawn from the original version; the editors hope to bring out the rewritten chapters later. As it stands, the book does not have much cohesion: the first three chapters are on social, literary and intellectual history; the last two give close readings of Chaucerian texts; and the fourth chapter, patched together from a section on alliterative poems and a section on Langland, is intended to serve as a bridge.

In the first part, Professor Salter sketches a medieval England that was cosmopolitan rather than provincial, and more catholic in its literary tastes than is generally believed. She demonstrates how frequently alliterative and non-alliterative verse are together in the same manuscript, and how similar the two sorts of verse often are in their subject-matter – though I am not sure that this justifies her conclusion that "medieval readers were... less interested than present-day critics in taking note of the distinctions between alliterative and non-alliterative writing". And Chaucer's "respect" for alliterative verse seems to me unproved, even if too much importance may have been placed on his parson's sneer at it. Salter is surely right in stressing both the importance of French in England, and the fact that many people were mobile, but at the end one is left thinking wistfully that there must have been some people who stayed at home and spoke English.

The emphasis in the second part is on diversity. Salter does not believe that the great poets of the late fourteenth century can be usefully related to each other, and she does not find much coherence in many of their individual poems. The strength of this section comes from her deep feelings for the tensions of that age: "sentiments of protest, dissent, revolt were often held in uneasy balance with those of acquiescence and conformity". *Piers Plowman* is the poem she is the most in sympathy with, and she has some fine pages on it, pages almost good enough to make one accept her claim that it is "the greatest vernacular poem of the later Middle Ages". However, her long attempt to rehabilitate the *Venus of the Parliament of Fowles* ("No breath of criticism disturbs the still scene...") is not likely to win much assent, even among the staunchest anti-Robertsonian. One should applaud such a pro-Venerian and anti-establishment undertaking, but the text will simply not support it.

The last chapter, on "The Knight's Tale", shows a return to form. As with the *Parliament of Fowles*, Salter pays careful attention to the Boccaccio source, but here she argues, to better effect, that Chaucer's meaning is far different from Boccaccio's. She conveys admirably the desolation of the tale. Where some may part company from her is with her treatment of the end. Her conclusion (roughly the same one arrived at in her small book of 1962 on the Knight's and Clerk's Tales) is that Theseus' long Boethian speech is a Chaucerian evasion: "it is not so easy to describe [Chaucer's] methods... as both skilful and entirely scrupulous". Some people, perhaps most, find Theseus' speech entirely satisfactory. I do not, and I think Professor Salter's statement of its effects is precisely accurate: one of the most interesting paradoxes of the *Knight's Tale* [is] that that Boethian sections of Theseus' speech, by which Chaucer sought so strenuously to blur the outlines of a bleak story, worked to throw an even clearer light upon its bleak nature. But could this clearer light not be what Chaucer intended? It is, after all, Theseus' speech, not Chaucer's; it is the best answer that the farthest-seeing mortal in the tale can give to the problems of the world, and the point is that it is not a satisfactory answer.

## Affecting the situation

Sarah Waterlow

**R. W. SHARPLES**  
*Alexander of Aphrodisias on Fate*  
310pp. Duckworth. £24.  
0 156 1589 0

This book is an important contribution to the history of philosophy. Alexander of Aphrodisias' treatise on fate is a record of major confrontation between two of the great intellectual systems of antiquity, the Aristotelian and the Stoic. The question at issue is that of freedom and determinism. Alexander (second-third century AD), possibly the greatest of the ancient commentators on Aristotle, was also himself a devoted Aristotelian. In the *De Fato*, written while he was head of the Peripatetic school at Athens, he sets out to refute, on Aristotelian principles, the Stoic doctrine that "all things come to be of necessity and by fate". His arguments are wide-ranging, vigorous and closely analytical. For these qualities, as well as for its historical importance, this work deserves the wider interest R. W. Sharples's new edition is certain to attract. We have now a reliable translation of *De Fato* and related extracts from Alexander's other writings, together with a commentary and a historical introduction. These are lucid, informative and very thoroughly documented. The volume also contains a photographic reproduction of Bruns's text, Dr Sharples's notes on this text, a select bibliography six pages long, an *Index locorum* and a general index. Specialists on Alexander and the Stoics will find this an invaluable compendium of relevant scholarship.

From its title, the *De Fato* might seem to promise little of interest to philosophers today: the idea of "fate", which suggests a non-moral superhuman agency, is seldom a serious topic in contemporary discussions of determinism. The focus now is on the idea that every event is the product of some set or other of natural conditions whose characters and connections are discoverable by science. The Stoics, on the other hand, were led to determinism from their semi-religious vision of the universe as permeated by a single, eternal, active principle expressing itself in every event. They called "fate" and also "God". But they also defended the position with arguments of kinds more familiar to us: as for instance that "every movement has a cause". One thing, however, is common to all forms of determinism: they seem to make nonsense of morality and law. It is with this apparent consequence that Alexander is chiefly concerned, and many of his arguments could be aptly used in a twentieth-century context. Indeed, many are.

It seems absurd to tell someone "That was your fault" while claiming that there was never any possibility that it would not happen. But the Stoics, like many modern determinists, tried to show that there is no contradiction in that: we can believe in universal necessity without being logically obliged to abandon our ordinary beliefs concerning human responsibility. Alexander contends, in effect, that the first impression was sound; these are irreconcilable positions. He argues at length and in detail that those who claim the contrary cannot support their claim except by distorting the meanings of the key terms.

Alexander succeeds in raising a number of serious difficulties for anybody wishing to maintain that a world in which everything happens of necessity would have room for it for moral agents such as we take ourselves to be. But one of his most prominent lines of attack is likely to seem questionable to modern readers. He argues that if everything were to happen of necessity, human effort and planning would never make any difference to the course of events – adding the consideration that even if that were not so obviously absurd as it is, the disastrous practical effects of accepting such a view of life would be reason enough for rejecting any theory that entails it. But it is hard to see the force of the argument. The proposition that everything comes about of necessity does not entail that human will makes no difference. Such "do-nothing" fatalism is not a consequence of determinism. For instance, modern determinists typically regard a human decision as giving rise to changes which but for it would not have taken place. The decision is an effect of earlier causes, true, but

is also itself a cause of further effects. And Alexander himself describes his opponents' view in similar terms: no thing occurs that is not a link in a causal chain (the metaphor is a Stoic one) stretching endlessly in both temporal directions. Against this, he appears to have no effective reply. Just when he needs to substantiate his own claim that the decision (if really a decision, or of real moral significance) cannot itself be necessitated, he falls back on the seemingly irrelevant protest that it does affect what happens.

But it would be historically short-sighted to dismiss this simply as confused thinking. Perhaps for us there is no essential connection between the idea (i) that an event B is the necessary effect of a prior cause, A, and the idea (ii) that B's own outcome, C, would have occurred just the same even without B, so that B makes no difference. That is because we hold, in general, a non-purposive view of causality. The physical sciences have seen to that – sciences undreamt of by Alexander. But for an Aristotelian philosopher, an efficient cause, in the model case, is an agent (not necessarily intelligent or even conscious) which sets in train a process directed towards some definite outcome; and the intermediate stages are to be explained as brought about by the agent in order that the outcome be realized. According to this way of thinking, it is quite possible that where B is causally intermediate between A and the outcome C, the latter would have been realized even in the absence of B; for the prior cause, A, being purposive, might – and if powerful, would – have brought about C by some other means. Such adaptiveness is the hallmark of purpose.

Thus in a sense it is a matter of indifference whether or not B occurs, and when the Stoics suggested that a human decision is in every case an intermediate link in a chain stretching back beyond the human individual's control, Alexander's charge of fatalism, though narrowly based, was not inconsequential. To Aristotelian eyes, that Stoic picture portrays the decision as a means or instrument whereby some non-human agent (whether natural or supernatural) does not affect the argument achieves an effect which it would surely have achieved in some other way (if possible) if the person had decided differently or not at all. Even now, unsophisticated people ask, when confronted with determinism, not only: "But how then is it ever right to punish anyone?" but also, often enough: "So then what difference can we ever make?" as if these objections have a single ground and single target. It is clear that the naive questioners are using, ineptly, a conception of causality such as philosophers now favour, or are they, like Alexander, operating coherently with a more primitive and, it may be, a more natural concept?

## Crofter's Wife

She walks through the village  
carrying her messages from the Co-op;  
the mice are burrowing through the walls,  
the rats gnaw the potatoes

which her heart-broken husband has gathered  
in the haze of autumn...  
awent in beads on his forehead  
black dirt on his hands.

Prices are going up  
year after year,  
soon even the harmless daffodil  
will be valued in gold.

Her husband has a hand like a turnip  
with the dirt adhering to it,  
the ground bubbles with the coals  
that the furnace must pay.

The bag grows heavier and heavier.  
The girls are rotating  
anonymously behind the counter  
like fresh innamenable stars.

IAIN CRICHTON SMITH

## Individual instances

John Marenbon

**EDWARD BOOTH**  
*Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*  
314pp. Cambridge University Press. £35.  
0 521 25254 7

Edward Booth has written a book not only unflinching in its intelligence and remarkable in its scholarship, but also of far wider importance than its title might suggest. It studies the influence which Aristotelian ontology had on thinkers up to the thirteenth century – a story of creative misunderstanding which involves a reassessment of the links between antique, Islamic and medieval Christian philosophy, and of the complex, interconnected heritage of Plato and Aristotle within these traditions.

Father Booth describes Aristotle's ontology as "aporetic" because it explores, but does not attempt to resolve, a central difficulty: reality, Aristotle believes, is made up of individual things (and not, for instance, Platonic Ideas); but knowledge must begin from universals. Aristotle tackled the problem repeatedly (especially in *Metaphysics* III and VII), sometimes considering individuals as individuals, sometimes rather as instances of a universal. Neither emphasis was intended to be definitive. Booth argues that none of Aristotle's successors was content, like him, to leave the problem unsolved, its very intractability an initiation to the subject-matter of his ontology. In the third century AD, Alexander of Aphrodisias, commentator and systematizer of Aristotle, asserted the primacy of individuals with few of the qualifications found in the *Metaphysics*. This "radical Aristotelianism" enjoyed a revival in late antiquity, among thinkers such as John Philoponus and, in parts of his work, Boethius. By contrast, Neoplatonists like Porphyry and Proclus, encouraged by Aristotle's aporetic hesitations, attempted to fit Aristotelian logic within a metaphysical scheme in which universals had ontological priority. Despite translations of Neoplatonic material into Arabic, Booth considers that Islamic thinkers from the time of Alfarabi (787–795) adopted the radical Aristotelian approach to ontology. Neither Avicenna (980–1037) nor Averroes (1126–98) was aware of Aristotle's aporetic method, although the contradictions with which it deals are not entirely excluded from their discussions.

The thirteenth-century Christian philosophers Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas were heirs to this Islamic tradition. They tried, Booth believes, to reconcile this inheritance, not simply with Christianity, but with a mainly Neoplatonic tradition of Christian thought, represented by Augustine, parts of Boethius

and the pseudo-Dionysius. Albert's method was to accommodate an Aristotelian view of genera and species within a metaphysics of emanation, discussed very often in metaphors of light. Aquinas, developing on ideas modified from Proclus by the pseudo-Dionysius, argued that essence is communicated wholly and separately to each individual. He was consequently able to maintain a radical Aristotelian position on universals, without (Booth believes) incurring the problems which had given rise to Aristotle's original *aporia*.

Booth's detailed analyses of the many thinkers he discusses reflect the sureness of grasp which comes from a coherent, clear and yet subtle grasp of his theme as a whole. Sometimes he persuasively challenges commonly held views, as when he argues that it was not Platonism which Averroes sought to remove from Avicenna's reading of Aristotle, but rather the distortions introduced by an over-enthusiastic attempt at systematic clarity. Sometimes he brings perspective and precision to areas which other scholars have left vague. Aquinas' Platonism has been much discussed in recent years, but hardly ever as accurately defined, both textually and analytically; the Aristotelian elements in the thought of Neoplatonists like Porphyry, Proclus and the pseudo-Dionysius are presented sharply and succinctly; and the pages dealing with Boethius' uncertainty over his ontology are far more philosophically penetrating than even the best of recent specialized studies.

A book of such quality and importance provokes many queries: one of these concerns its subject-matter; another, its method. Booth devotes a short section to the ninth-century philosopher John Scotus (Erlangen). He leaves aside other Latin thinkers of the eighth to twelfth centuries, because he believes that they did not deal in any interesting ways with the material of Aristotle's aporetic ontology. It is indeed true that none of these thinkers had direct access to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. But it might be argued that, through Aristotle's logic, Boethius' logical commentaries and *Opuscula sacra* and the pseudo-Dionysian corpus, twelfth-century writers were introduced to exactly the problems about individuals and universals which had troubled Aristotle; and that they discussed them imaginatively and seriously. In particular, Gilbert of Poitiers anticipates aspects of Aquinas' ontological theory. Perhaps the elements which thirteenth-century scholastics had to syncretize were even more diverse than Booth suggests. But were Albert the Great and Aquinas merely, or primarily, syncretists? Booth portrays them as thinkers of great power, concerned to reconcile diverse philosophical theories which threatened the very stability of Christian intellectual life by their apparent conflict. The urgency of this task seems – on Booth's account – to have left them little time for reflection on philosophical problems as opposed to philosophers' positions. Is this impression justified? Both medieval thinkers propose systems; but it is easy, when emphasizing the systematic coherence of their thought, to do less than justice to its depth. In Aquinas, at least, philosophical difficulties are frequently examined with the same awareness of complexity as in Aristotle. But this is manifest, not in a failure to reach conclusions, but through tensions between treatments of the same complexes of problems from different points of view. Booth's exclusive concentration on the ontological aspect of the questions he raises tends to hide this side of Aquinas. St Thomas also discusses the relation of the individual to the universal in connection with the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language. Each of Aquinas' arguments has the appearance of conclusiveness, but there are gaps and contradictions in the treatment as a whole which make it more aporetic than systematic. There is therefore room to query Booth's conclusion that "Aristotelian aporetic ontology died with Aristotle", but none to doubt the fascination and importance of his book for every student of medieval philosophy.

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# Attacking the ultimate

Brian Pippard

S. CHANDRASEKHAR  
Eddington: The most distinguished  
astrophysicist of his time  
64pp. Cambridge University Press. £7.50.  
0521 257468

The subtitle quotes nearly as distinguished a contemporary of Eddington's at the time of his death; and S. Chandrasekhar, one of this year's Nobel Laureates in physics, does not dispute the tribute in the centenary lectures he delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge, and which he has enlarged somewhat for publication.

No one who knows anything about Professor Chandrasekhar will expect an insubstantial act of piety, and indeed any account of Eddington that omitted serious discussion of his work would be of little interest. Beyond his great original contributions to astrophysics and Relativity, the monographs which stand as his memorial and the popular books of the 1920s and 30s which turned many a young head towards science (for, like Goldsmith, he wrote like an angel), Eddington's life was not full of incident, except perhaps for the vigorous controversies he and his contemporaries indulged in. Of these, and of the rough handling he himself suffered as a young man, Chandrasekhar writes briefly, and with measured charity, leaving room to describe, if only in outline, the ideas that reveal Eddington's

greatness and, in his last years, his colossal failure.

One brief episode as man of action receives proper attention, and the story is indeed well worth telling of how he was conscripted to lead the expedition to observe the 1919 solar eclipse from West Africa, to expiate his wartime sin of being a Quaker and a conscientious objector. This was the eclipse that provided a direct test of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, a spectacular success which made Eddington hardly less famous than Einstein himself. It turned his mind to applying Relativity in cosmology, away from his studies of stellar motions and of the structure of the stars themselves.

In the earlier period it was he who first saw clearly how the conversion of hydrogen into helium allowed so much energy to be liberated at the expense of mass (Einstein's  $E = mc^2$ ) that the stars could keep going as long as they must have done to make sense of the geological evidence for the age of the Earth. Chandrasekhar rightly bestows high praise on a passage he quotes in full, where Eddington explains his ideas in popular language to the British Association, ending "If, indeed, the sub-atomic energy in the stars is being freely used to maintain their great furnaces, it seems to bring a little nearer to fulfillment our dream of controlling this latent power for the well-being of the human race - or for its suicide". Not even Eddington could have imagined what was to destroy Hiroshima twenty-five years later, nor did he ever know for he had

died the previous year.

Towards the end of the 1920s he grew single-mindedly, possibly pathologically, committed to developing an all-embracing cosmological theory, in which the mathematical structure, including the numerical constants, would emerge as logically necessary consequences of a small number of very general assumptions. Two constants in particular, the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron, and what is technically known as the reciprocal of the fine-structure constant, he derived as 1847.4 and 136 respectively. We know now that neither figure is correct, the best available values being 1836.11 and 137.036, and Eddington is nowadays remembered, derisively and unfairly, for changing his prediction of exactly 136 to exactly 137 when experimental results seemed to demand it. If his critics would look at his papers of this time they will find more to the matter than a surreptitious addition of 1.

Nevertheless, the best minds among his contemporaries could not follow his reasoning, and it has become clear that the fundamental structure of matter is much more complex than he could have guessed. His heroic attack on the ultimate was doomed, but the idealism that looked towards a totally self-consistent model of the universe is still very much alive. If a unified theory is ever found, Eddington, as one of the early pioneers, will be remembered perhaps even after his solid achievements have conferred on him the anonymous immortality that is the lot of most great men.

## Heavenly spectacles

O. M. Ashford

ADEN and MARJORIE MEINEL  
Sunsets, Twilights and Evening Skies  
163pp. Cambridge University Press. £17.50.  
0521 252022

The subject of this book is the atmospheric optical effects which enhance the beauty of our evening and night skies. Among the better-known and more spectacular of these are the red skies which delight the shepherds and, for those who live in favoured latitudes, the aurora, or merry-dancers. More obscure, but no less exciting, are the green flash, the zodiacal light and the gegenschein. All these, and several more, are here described, and explained.

Unlike some authors who aim to explain science to the "general reader", Aden and Marjorie Meinel have eschewed a dry, systematic approach. They have instead mixed personal experience with science and added a measure of aesthetics. This may not please everybody but it should appeal to those for whom the book was explicitly written: the "inquisitive people who enjoy nature and are interested in knowing the spectrum of appearances of sunset and evening skies". All will enjoy the twelve pages of colour photographs; noteworthy are the pictures of sunsets produced by volcanic ash, a subject in which the authors are particularly interested.

The phrase "general reader" should not be interpreted too literally; a good background in elementary mathematics and physics is neces-

sary for a full understanding of the authors' explanations. On the other hand, a reader with a more professional training may be disturbed by the looseness of style from a scientific point of view. Pressure should not, for example, be equated with density, nor should rainfall and surface temperature be described as the causes of climate - they are *part* of the climate. It is likewise not strictly correct to say that atmospheric gases are not retained on the moon because their kinetic energy is larger than the escape velocity.

Liko Robert Greenler's earlier book *Rainbows, Halos and Glories*, which is essentially complementary to rather than overlapping with the Meinel's volume, this is a bold and, in the main, readable marriage of science with aesthetics.

## Freshwater kinds

Stephen Mills

STEPHEN DOWNES  
The New Compleat Angler  
176pp. Orbis. £9.95.  
0856135334

In 1901 John Buchan praised Isaac Walton for having been the first to endow angling with "a halo of lotors which it has never lost". The halo has not entirely illuminated *The New Compleat Angler*, which is at its brightest when seeking quietly to inform and its most shady when striving to amuse.

The book has nothing to do with Isaac Walton, other than being a by-product of his forerunners. It describes anew the fish of Britain's freshwater rivers, how to catch them, how to cook them and how people have exaggerated about them in the past. Stephen Downes has been anxious to avoid boring his readers on anything that might be considered as the least scientific matter. Consequently, he has rather cleverly, shared out the physiological attributes of fish among the various species with which he deals. This perch, Britain's most colourful fish, prompts him to discuss how fish themselves actually perceive colour. Those in the green, algae-rich polar seas, we are told, have vision biased towards the green area of the spectrum, whereas our own river fish, muddying along in water tinged by the yellowish-reds of decaying vegetation, are mainly red-sensitive.

With the pike he explains the neuromast system by which fish can precisely interpret the displacement of water, not the sound but the

feel of other creatures moving at a distance. Pike, unlike most fish, have these nerve organs exposed in the skin for maximum sensitivity. This enables the "legendary monster", as Downes calls it, to home in on its prey even in the murkiest depths. It must rely on its eyes, however, for the final deadly lunge, since its own sudden rush through the water automatically overloads its neuromasts.

So also we learn how chub come to have ears the size of a hare's, why trout may seem to be short-sighted and whether carp really get drunk if they are kept out of the water. This last is a moot point since carp, deprived of oxygen, can apparently obtain energy by fermenting themselves, giving off ethyl alcohol as a result. According to Downes one Indian cyprinid, *Rasbora daniconius*, placed in a dry and hermetically sealed jar, managed to survive for 102 days.

Downes is occasionally too playful and this robs the book of commitment, allowing him to

Michael Joseph ate the publishers of the excellent *Shell Guide to the Birds of Britain and Ireland* (336pp. £7.95. 0 7181 2220 8), a companion volume (though this is inaccurately acknowledged in the bibliography) to James Fisher's equally good history of British birds and birdwatchers, *The Shell Bird Book* (1966). With careful notes by James Ferguson-Les (a past president of the British Trust for Ornithology and the current chairman of the Records Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union) which maintains the official list of our birds, set beside small but clear distribution maps by J. T. R. Sharrock (chairman of the

shrug off serious issues. The introduction of the zander, for instance, a voracious Eastern European predator, is regarded by many qualified people as posing a substantial threat to the populations of several native British fish. Downes, however, extends it a slightly pretentious welcome: "I confess I am prejudiced in their favour; but then the first time I met zander was at Epemoy in Champagne. In a fish-plate, along with several of the sparkling local wines. It was a memorable meal; but they would not give me the recipe."

There are dozens of books that waffle about fishing and dozens more that waffle about cooking. That *The New Compleat Angler* goes further is ensured by the eloquence of Martin Knowliden's illustrations. Dazzling still-lives, haunting river pictures - a hot of an angler reflected in the ripples, a glimpse of a hooked trout turning in the depths - no angler could look at them without his rod-arm and reel-finger twitching.

European Ornithological Atlas Committee) and precise and very lively illustrations by Ian Willis (who painted the fine figures of the raptors in Volume Two of *Birds of the Western Palearctic*, 1980), this exemplary guide is sensibly divided into two sections - the Regulars, birds we might see, and the Vagrants, birds we might not. But if you do have reason to believe that a Great White Egret is after your goldfish, an Eleonora's Falcon is pinching your sparrow, and a Blue-checked Bee-eater is keeping your gnat down, then this is the best all-purpose small bird book yet produced. It will take you a long time to read, but it is worth it. R. D. H.

## Universal sightings

Colin Ronan

PATRICK MOORE, GARRY HUNT, IAIN NICOLSON and PETER CATTTERMOLLE  
The Atlas of the Solar System  
464pp. Mitchell Beazley, in association with the Royal Astronomical Society. £19.95.  
085533 468 1  
NIGEL HENBEST and MICHAEL MARTEN  
The New Astronomy  
240pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.50.  
0521 256836

Studies of our planetary system have passed through many stages. The earliest were concerned with planetary motion, first about the Earth and then, in the sixteenth century, with a fully fledged heliocentric system. This initiated a revolution in thought that culminated with Newton's mathematical theory of universal gravitation.

But these were all theoretical ideas. Not until after the first astronomical use of the telescope in 1609 was the physical nature of the planets really considered. This turned out to be a difficult field of endeavour, primarily because our atmosphere hampered observation, limiting the detail that could be discerned even under the most favourable conditions. Planetary photography was unsatisfactory and drawings by experienced observers ran the danger of personal bias, as Percival Lowell's famous sketches of Martian canals bear witness. The one body on which terrestrial observation was adequate, though limited, was the Moon.

Now all this has changed. Within the past twenty-five years there has been a revolution in observing the solar system because we can now launch spacecraft to the planets and observe from beyond the terrestrial atmosphere. *The Atlas of the Solar System*, which is a compilation from a series of more detailed books on the Sun's planetary family, is an up-to-date record from the wealth of detailed information astronomers now possess.

A beautifully illustrated book, it contains the latest studies from space and welds them into a superb graphic description of the entire planetary system. Here Patrick Moore and Garry Hunt have been aided by Iain Nicolson, who has written about the Sun, and Peter Catttermolle whose speciality is planetary geology. As seems inevitable with a compilation like this there is some fluctuation of intellectual level: here and there the text assumes a medium of scientific knowledge, though not as much as Cambridge's recent *The New Solar System*. So *The Atlas* usefully fills a vacant niche and, in spite of the odd slip here and there, does so superbly, being a readable as well as pictorial cornucopia of present knowledge, with the additional bonus of providing a description of planetary spacecraft and tables giving future positions of the planets up to 1990.

*The New Astronomy*, with title and headings provided in a mirror-image italic as if to emphasize its novelty, also pays tribute to new observing techniques. But its purview is not restricted to the solar system; it takes the whole universe as its theme. It is concerned with results using optical and radio telescopes, as well as orbiting observatories devoted to studying the sky at wave-lengths with restricted visibility from Earth, and even wave-lengths that cannot be observed at all by ground-based astronomers. So we have pictures and descriptions of what has been found from radio, infra-red, ultraviolet, X-ray, and even gamma-ray exploration of the universe; as well as from optical studies using advanced photographic methods. Moreover, the results depicted here also use the new skills in computer processing which provide evidence in the form of false but revealing colour images.

Nigel Henbest's text is a model of clarity. The false colour pictures, and the computer images built up using information from terrestrial as well as space observations, are here transformed into clear guides to conditions even in the furthest depths of space. The picture selection is admirable too: Michael Marten has made excellent use of his Science Photo Library. This book - the first to present and explain "new astronomy" to a wide public - deserves every success.

## Make mine Médoc

Edmund Penning-Rowsell

HUBRECHT DUIJKER  
The Great Wine Châteaux of Bordeaux  
200pp.  
085533 469 X  
The Good Wines of Bordeaux  
200pp.  
085533 472 X  
Translated by Danielle de Froindmont Associates  
Mitchell Beazley. £13.95 each.

The department of the Gironde embraces what is surely the most interesting wine region in the world: not only because it has a fair claim to producing the best red and the best sweet white wines, but also because there is such variety in their style and quality, even from property to property within the same commune. As a result it has attracted writers to a degree unequalled by other wine areas; and not so much professional authors or wine merchants as amateurs and consumers. Curiously enough nearly all have been foreigners to France, perhaps because many of the natives seem to believe that knowledge of French wines is inherited. Among the first of these foreign amateur wine writers was Charles Cocks, an English schoolmaster living in Bordeaux and translator of French anti-clerical literature, who in 1850 published the first edition of *Bordeaux et Ses Vins*, which, now known as Cocks et Fère, and in its thirteenth edition, is the "bible of Bordeaux", unrivalled as a wine reference book elsewhere in the world. It is true that Bordeaux savants have recently written important books about the vineyards that surround them, but they write as historians, whereas the foreign authors have generally written as consumers for other consumers.

Today much more down-to-earth and exact information is demanded concerning the more than 3,000 vineyard properties bearing the self-given prefix of "château". Of this new generation of writers none is more capable of providing the consumers with what they may be expected to want than the Dutch journalist Hubrecht Duijker. Duijker has also written about Burgundy and other wine districts, but his first book was *The Great Wine Châteaux of Bordeaux*, originally published in Holland and Britain in 1975, and now in a new translation, revised and brought up to date. In the foreword to his most recent work, *The Good Wines of Bordeaux*, he states that his preparation involved visiting 200 châteaux (nearly 100 others had formed the subject of *Great Wine Châteaux*), tasting a couple of thousand wines in the course of two months and visiting châteaux five or six days a week from early morning to dusk. The result of this hard work is that both these books are as accurate and as up to date as any such book can be on a wine that inevitably alters in an area where significant change are always taking place (four important estates changed hands last year alone).

The first English edition of *The Great Wine Châteaux of Bordeaux*, which was devoted to the classed-growth Médocs, the *premiers grands crus classés* of St-Émilion and two leading Pomerols, did not attract the attention it deserved. A new edition is welcome, not least because since the mid-1970s there has been a realignment of the traditional Bordeaux wine trade, an extension of the vineyards, an expansion in output of many of the classified estates and a series of excellent, interesting vintages. Accurate and amply informative as ever, Duijker has no hesitation in criticizing in a modest way those proprietors apparently not producing wines worthy of their classification. The same applies to his comments on their vintages - though not everyone will be so generous about the 1972 clarets and the generally charming 1974s.

*The Good Wines of Bordeaux* is even more useful and timely. In recent years the *crus classés* and their equivalents in the other leading districts have become increasingly expensive, and a number have become objects of speculation and investment. In many cases by individuals and organizations with little or no intention of ever drinking a cork and who look only to make a capital gain out of their *en primeur* purchases. As a result the proprietors, aware of the high profile realized in the London auc-

tion-rooms, have increased their opening prices in order to secure a larger return themselves. This has not been the case with the *crus bourgeois* - a semi-official classification restricted to the Médoc but loosely used elsewhere - where the growers have greatly improved their vineyards and wine-making in the past decade and now offer some of the best value in claret. Duijker's new book is valuable too because the estates it covers, though numerous, are nothing like so well known as the *crus classés*, and it provides a guide to the properties, often very large, that lie in such little-known communes as St-Seurin-de-Cadourne in the Haut-Médoc and Bégadan in the Bas-Médoc. Seventy-two of these are described in at least a page apiece.

## For browsing bibbers

Ray Ockenden

HUGH JOHNSON  
Wine Companion: The New Encyclopaedia of Wines, Vineyards and Winemakers.  
544pp. Mitchell Beazley. £14.95.  
085533 4193

Readers of the novels of Charles Morgan will recall the exchange: "What shall it be, Marie, the Chamberlin or the Latour? 'Am I to choose? Then, the Musigny. It's too warm a night for the Chamberlin, and that Latour will improve yet.'" Few experience such agonies of choice; fewer still could draw fine distinctions between Burgundies. But then Marie is French - unlike the remarkable Hugh Johnson.

Hugh Johnson comes in various sizes, from vest-pocket nip to coffee-table magnum. His *Wine Companion* is essentially a Good Loo book, like Brewer and the lighter anthologies. Unlike the glossier *World Atlas of Wine*, with its photographs and beautiful maps, the *Companion* is a compendious reference work, ideal for settling doubts and bats, and above all for browsing; appropriately, since it aims to encourage serious browsing among wines of different qualities and countries.

The introduction honestly acknowledges that this *Companion* is above all a companion volume to the *Atlas* and the *Pocket Wine Book*. It does not reveal which vintages to buy or when to drink them (information that requires annual updating); no entry in the otherwise useful index guides you if you have forgotten the meaning of Blanc de Blancs or Passe-tout-

All the Sauternes and Barsac classed growths are described in detail, in some ways a more difficult task than for the red wines, as there is less variety in style and achievement. All the St-Émilion *grands crus classés* with more than a domestic reputation were also visited, as well as twenty-one Pomerols, whose wines are so popular in Holland and in Belgium that they are far from being widely found on British wine lists. Altogether eighty-two properties outside the Médoc are dealt with in detail; on another sixty within the whole region extended notes have been written. Finally, the fact that the author deals largely with recent vintages is particularly useful, since it is these which are most likely to be available in Britain.

grains. For such things you need the pocket-book, as you will if you are hesitating over which wines to serve with particular dishes. The *Companion*, clear about its priorities, instead advises the reader what to eat with particular wines.

The most helpful part of the book for the general reader is the final section, "Enjoying Wine", which gives knowledgeable and un-dogmatic answers to practical questions. The bulk of the book is rather for the semi-expert imbibor or investor: an encyclopaedia covering the world's principal wine-producing areas (except the Soviet Union, which is relegated to a footnote). Well over a third of this part is devoted to France, and another third to Italy, Germany (relatively thinly represented) and the United States.

Johnson helpfully selects certain "top wines" for special attention and discusses how they are made. Elsewhere, information beyond the purely statistical is eclectic: to Bordeaux, the author lingers variously over history, houses, their owners, or outstanding vintages. In other countries he concentrates more on regions and wine-makers; few vineyard names are mentioned in the German section (the *Atlas* is fuller here).

In appearance, the *Companion* belies its encyclopedic nature. Marginalia and summaries appear like notebook jottings, not always meaningfully placed; the jaunty illustrations serve rather to lighten the text than to inform. The sometimes fussy layout, actually suits a book which is at once erudite and unashamedly personal. Even Johnson's unemphatic comments are shrewd: his delicate notes on Chamberlin and Musigny amply vindicate Marie's choice.

## Grape expectations

Keith Jeffery

LEONARD S. BERNSTEIN  
The Official Guide to Wine Snobbery  
160pp. Elm Tree Books. £5.95.  
0241 10769 9

Anyone who thinks that Málaga is a holiday resort, or an English part of a house, who would hesitate to describe a wine as "chunky", or who perhaps knows just enough to become embarrassed when ordering Matos Rosé in a restaurant should purchase this book. It reveals that with a modicum of knowledge, a considerable amount of money (*grands crus classés* come expensive) and a truly contemptuous attitude towards humankind the average imbibor can become a fully fledged wine snob.

This is a handy book of etiquette for those who aspire to the "naïve domestic burgundy" school of wine-appreciation. There is much useful advice of a general nature. A wine cellar should be stocked with bottles which the snob will enjoy talking about, rather than necessarily enjoy drinking. At a blind wine tasting - and this is the single most sensible hint in the book - the author recommends: "sit next to an expert". Leonard S. Bernstein instructs us what we should do with the cork when offered it in a restaurant and lays down which wines are "in" and which "out". Armed with this volume one will never commit the blots of ordering, Mouton Cadet, even on the ground that it

"tastes nice", or slobber one's guests by holding a wine glass by the bowl.

The trainee snob will learn that the white-wine-with-fish / red-wine-with-meat code is no more than a very rough guide which should at some stage publicly be ignored. (Of considerably more use, though possibly not very snobbish, is Gavin Lyall's iron rule for parties: white wine for carpets and red for linoleum.) One of the chief wine-with-food dilemmas concerns Sauternes, since Chateau d'Yquem is "the world's most IN white wine", and therefore essential drinking for wine snobs. In Britain such a sweet wine would normally be served at the end of a meal with pudding or dessert, yet the Sauternais themselves would argue emphatically that the wine ought never to be taken with sweet food of any sort. They would rather drink it with *foie gras* at the beginning of a meal. It is said that Russian aristocrats used to drink d'Yquem with everything - but look what happened to them.

The complete wine snob is a bit like a well-regarded Bordeaux *en bourgeois* (snobbery is *always bourgeois*) - say, do Poz or Citran. He should have a fine colour, steady legs and a good nose - both for smelling and for looking down. Perhaps a little harsh when young, he might well eventually develop a smooth, rounded and enjoyable character. But, ultimately, the only thing to do with both wine and snob is to look them in a cellar (preferably not the same one) and ignore them for as long as possible.

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We regret an error of transmission whereby the reference, in E. S. Rice's review of Naphthall Lewis's *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (January 27), to the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* was, wrongly, printed as: "the *Journal of the Egyptological Association*".

G.L. Hersey's *Architecture, Poetry and Number in the Royal Palace at Caserta* is published by the MIT Press; not the University of Chicago Press, as stated in the TLS review of October 14 1983.